HELENA,

A

NOVEL.

BY A LADY OF DISTINCTION.

LONDON:
Printed for W. RICHARDSON, Royal Exchange.
M,DCC,LXXXVIII.

HELENA.

A

NOVEL.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Editor, having accidentally met the manuſcript of the following work, while in the poſſeſſion of the fair author's friend, acknowledges himſelf to have been ſo ſtruck with its unaffected merit, that he applied for permiſſion to commit it to the preſs; and is happy in having ſucceeded in his application. He is of opinion, that ſo long as virtuous principles receive additional charms from the pen of youth and beauty,—ſo long as intereſting and pathetic ſcenes can affect the human heart,—ſo long does he think this excellent novel will receive the general approbation of the public.

HELENA.

CHAP. I.

IN the month of Auguſt, a meſſenger arrived at Barnhurſt Caſtle, with a letter which he deſired might be inſtantly delivered to his grace the duke of Clevedon, as it contained matters of importance to him. It was accordingly conveyed to his grace, who was at dinner with a large party and his two ſons the marquis of Huntley and lord Charles Sidney.

On peruſing the letter, the duke turned pale, and his countenance expreſſed an emotion of the deepeſt concern. He had no ſooner made an end of it, than he apologized to the company for leaving them, but that a dying friend requeſted his preſence at the diſtance of thirty miles. He then ordered his carriage to be got ready in a moment, and, having deſired lord Huntley to ſupply his place, went up to the dutcheſs while his orders were obeyed. Illneſs confined her grace to her dreſſing room; and, after a ſhort

conference, he threw himſelf into his chaiſe, bidding the ſervant take the road to D——, where he arrived late in the evening, and ſtopped at the door of a ſmall but elegant houſe in that village. No ſooner was his arrival announced, than an old female ſervant attended. "Is your miſtreſs alive?" ſaid the duke in a mournful accent. "She is, my lord," replied ſhe, "and yet lingers to behold your grace." "Thank Heaven!" anſwered he; "conduct me to her, that I may receive her laſt injunctions, and view her once again ere life has forſaken her." As he ſpoke he aſcended to the apartment of his expiring friend: he found her, with an anxious impatience for his approach, ſtretched on the bed of death. "You are come, my lord," ſaid ſhe, in a voice rendered feeble by weakneſs, "you are come juſt in time to make the laſt moments of a fond mother calm and peaceful." He drew near the bed, but words were denied him, for a ſhort period grief ſeemed to check his utterance: he took the hand which ſhe had extended to welcome him, and preſſed it to his heart: "and is it thus only we are to meet!" cried he in a voice of ſorrow, "am I to behold you but a moment, and no more!" "Alas! my lord," replied ſhe, "the awful ſcene is cloſing, and ſhortly I ſhall be no more; but, for my child, my beloved Helena, I crave your kind protection:" then, turning to a female form who ſat weeping by her ſide, ſhe ſaid, "Approach, my child, and let me preſent you to your only protector." The young Helena was overcome with emotion; and the duke in the gentleſt terms aſſured her of his everlaſting regard. "May Heaven,"

Heaven," ſaid he, "forſake me in the hour of death, if I neglect the ſacred charge you commit to me; I will cheriſh her with my beſt care." "Retire for a moment, my love," ſaid the dying parent, "and compoſe your ſpirits, if poſſible, while I ſay a few words to the duke." Helena withdrew; and ſhe purſued her diſcourſe to her ſorrowing and attentive friend.

CHAP. II.

„AH, my lord," ſaid the dying lady, "you then weep over the victim of an ill-fated paſſion! but I mean not to complain; the moment of diſſolution is at hand, and I am about to appear before that God whoſe attribute is mercy; I truſt! then, that, as my repentance is ſincere, it will be accepted as an atonement for all my faults, blot but one guilty action from my life, and the reſt of it has been ſpent in an humble endeavour to fulfil the duties of my ſtation: let Helena find a protector, where her mother was forbid to accept one—let her, my lord, experience your affectionate ſupport againſt an unfeeling and a dangerous world; you will find her, I truſt, worthy your regard, bleſſed with native innocence, and of a diſpoſition to repay the attentions of a benevolent friendſhip with ſweetneſs and gratitude; the dutcheſs is poſſeſſed of that winning

ſenſibility and that gentleneſs of manners, which cannot fail of endearing her to all whom ſhe thinks worthy her eſteem and notice; to her virtues, then, I commend my Helena, as well as to the powerful protection of your grace." — "May wretchedneſs purſue me," replied the duke, "if I do not prove my affection ſincere, for her too charming and unhappy mother, by every act of parental fondneſs for her lovely daughter! Oh! my friend," continued he, "in the grave only every anxious, agonizing care will be forgotten, together with every tender remembrance; you go to enjoy the heaven you have deſerved."—"I go, indeed," anſwered ſhe, "to appear before that throne, where the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be revealed, to receive a juſt, but merciful ſentence; I die contented, to leave my child, my Helena, to your care: let me once more embrace her, and then I ſhall reſt for ever! Farewell, my lord; may the Father of Mercies bleſs and preſerve you, and all that are dear to you! This ſmall packet contains a ſhort account of myſelf, interwoven with ſome diſtreſſing and painful events; give it to Helena when you think proper."

CHAP. III.

HELENA was now ſummoned to receive the laſt bleſſing of her expiring mother. "My beloved child," ſaid ſhe to her weeping daughter, "my ſupport

ſupport againſt the corroding effects of ſorrow, the ſweet ſolace of many a heavy, weary hour, adieu! may the peace of heaven dwell for ever with you! may the angels of innocence and purity watch over and guard the life of my Helena from guilt, diſappointment, and grief! may her days be crowned with the happy fruits of virtue and integrity, and her death a glorious change to a better life."

Thus, in an anxious prayer for the welfare of her child, did this affectionate parent ſigh out her laſt breath, and quit this ſcene of ſorrow and diſappointment: ſhe ſunk into the arms of her daughter, and ceaſed to exiſt. Helena was inconſolable; ſhe preſſed the lifeleſs body of her mother to her beating heart, ſhe claſped her arms round the loved form, which had, while animated, beſtowed the fondeſt careſſes on her; ſhe continued for ſome time in all the agony of grief, till nature, exhauſted with the unuſual ſtruggle, ſunk into inſenſibility. The duke gave orders to have her conveyed to her own apartment, where every means was tried to reſtore her to life, and to ſooth her ſpirits to a more compoſed ſtate; but it was not to be expected that ſo great and recent a misfortune, and the juſt ſorrow it had occaſioned, would ceaſe to occupy the thoughts, or haraſs the feelings of Helena; ſhe continued violently to lament her loſs, and underwent painful emotions of both mind and body.

The duke ſhed the tears of unfeigned concern over the remains of her, to whoſe laſt accents he had attended with a pious reſpect to all they had enjoined, and contemplated with a mournful reſignation the inevitable fate of mortality, the end

of

of a being ſo much valued, from which neither riches, honors, nor beauty, (poſſeſſions highly prized, and anxiouſly preſerved) can reſcue us. From this ſilent, ſolemn view of death, he turned to pay the ſocial duties of life, to contribute to the reſtoration both of the health and ſerenity of his ward, who, after a diſturbed and ſleepleſs night, had ariſen, in order to ſeek the arbiter of her future fate. Overwhelmed with ſorrow, ſhe entered the dreſſing-room where ſhe had been accuſtomed to meet maternal tenderneſs; now a dull vacuity augmented her ſadneſs; ſhe ſat down and indulged her tears. The duke ſoon joined her; but finding her abſorbed in her own afflictions, he ſilently ſeated himſelf, feeling too great a reverence for her filial piety and ſorrow, to break in upon it with unmeaning conſolation; his feelings were too delicate, and his ſentiments too juſt, to offer the coldneſs of argument to a pure and rational tribute, paid to the memory of an indulgent parent by a virtuous and affectionate child.

When the firſt violence of her emotion had ſubſided, Helena looked up, while her face proclaimed her inward diſtreſs. The duke gazed on her with an air of tender pity; he took her hand, and, with all the gentleneſs of a benevolent ſenſibility, ſpoke peace to her, "I will give you," cried he, "to the arms of one whoſe virtues and whoſe tenderneſs will ſupply the place of her you have loſt: the dutcheſs of Clevedon is formed by nature to adminiſter comfort to every woe, to alleviate every misfortune, and to pour the balm of ſympathy into every wound; you will find her all your fondeſt expectations can paint, and ſhe has

has promiſed to be a mother to my Helena; I too will be a kind and indulgent father, and with us you ſhall learn to forget all your griefs: reſt your hopes of happineſs on my power and inclination to ſerve you; and, be aſſured, you ſhall not be diſappointed." Helena liſtened with a grateful attention to her kind guardian, expreſſed her lively ſenſe of his goodneſs, and felt ſomewhat relieved by his ſoothing care of her. But her grief was not to be ſubdued in a moment; the lenient hand of time, alone, heals wounds inflicted by ſuch a melancholy, though natural privation of endearing intercourſe. Helena had never felt the baleful influence of misfortune, till the hour which robbed her of her mother; for ſhe had never known any other relation, whoſe death might have called forth her ſorrow; ſhe had ſpent her days in the boſom of retirement, moving in a very confined circle of innocent ſociety, bleſſed with the approbation of ſurrounding friends.

The duke, who was no ſtranger to the human heart, knew that time, a change of ſcene and objects, would work more towards a reſtoration of her tranquillity than all he could urge; therefore left her at liberty to indulge herſelf in all the luxury of grief, till after the laſt ſolemn rites had been paid to her deceaſed parent, and ſhe was conſigned to her native duſt. In the mean time he ſettled all the affairs of the family, rewarded thoſe domeſtics whoſe ſervices could be no longer uſeful, and engaged the foſter-ſiſter of Helena to attend upon her, having fixed her old and faithful nurſe in a ſmall habitation of her own chuſing.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

HELENA had been early apprized of the duke's intention to introduce her as a conſtant reſident, for the future, of his own family, and that her final departure from the village of D—— was to take place immediately after the funeral of her mother. She diſpatched a meſſenger with the tidings of her misfortune, and a requeſt to ſee the friend of infancy and the choſen companion of her riper age. Maria obeyed the melancholy mandate of friendſhip, flew to conſole her dear Helena, and agreed to ſpend thoſe days with her, which were yet allotted for her reſidence in D—. On the boſom of her youthful friend, ſhe cried without reſtraint, poured out all her woe, and from her ſhe received ſuch conſolation as innocence and virtue could beſtow.

The day at length arrived on which Helena was to bid adieu to her peaceful, native home, to the dear joys of early friendſhip, and the leſs exalted rank in which ſhe had hitherto moved. She exchanged with Maria a faithful promiſe to cheriſh and remember, while abſent, the ſame lively regard which animated both when together; ſhe gave each domeſtic a proof of eſteem for their fidelity, and depoſited in the hands of her friend a ſum to be diſtributed amongſt thoſe poor neighbours, who had been accuſtomed to feel the benevolence of hers and her mother's ſpirit. Maria then, after many farewels, and having ſhed the tears of ſympathy

ſympathy on the boſom of Helena, threw herſelf into her father's carriage which waited to convey her home, while the more ſplendid equipage of the duke drew up to bear Helena to her new and magnificent habitation. Her fellow-traveller did all in his power to keep up her ſpirits, on the change ſhe was about to experience; and, in the courſe of their ſhort journey, diſcovered qualities in his ward, which did honor to both her head and heart: ſhe exerted herſelf that ſhe might not appear ungrateful to her companion, for the efforts he made to amuſe and chear. They travelled with an attention to her health, which had ſcarcely recovered the ſhock ſo lately received, and reached Barnhurſt Caſtle about ſix in the evening, to which place Helena was welcomed with every mark of attentive kindneſs, by its benevolent and polite lord.

CHAP. V.

THE extreme youth and beauty of the fair orphan, together with the moſt touching air of melancholy ſpread over her whole appearance, rendered her an object of pity and admiration. Her light auburn hair fell in ringlets on her deep mourning habit, and contributed to make her figure peculiarly intereſting. The duke, taking her hand, led her to the dutcheſs. She wiped the ſtarting tear from her eye, and prepared herſelf

to behold one who was to ſupply the place of her dear indulgent mother. In a few moments ſhe found herſelf in the preſence of the moſt engaging figure ſhe had ever ſeen. The dutcheſs roſe from a ſopha to receive her, and the tendereſt benevolence played on her features, which, with a complexion faded only by ſickneſs, yet proclaimed its priſtine beauty and delicacy: "Receive this child, madam," ſaid the duke, "with your wonted goodneſs; it is ſhe for whom I beſpoke your favour and protection." "Moſt willingly," replied the dutcheſs; "your grace's recommendation is always ſufficient, but here it is almoſt unneceſſary; for the countenance of your fair friend creates a powerful prepoſſeſſion in her favour: come," continued ſhe, taking the hand of Helena, "let me intreat you to feel yourſelf at home, and conſider me as one happy to contribute to your eaſe and pleaſure." Helena, covered with the bluſh of timidity, returned ſuch expreſſions as naturally flow from a grateful temper. "I am much indebted to you," ſaid her grace to the duke, "for providing me with a companion who promiſes me a delightful relief from reflections on that unpleaſant ſtate of confinement which my health frequently requires; not that I either wiſh or intend to bury my youthful companion in a ſick room; the enjoyment of thoſe elegant pleaſures we ſhall be able to procure, will I hope give an agreeable variety to the ſcene. "Where are my ſons," aſked the duke, "ſhall I not ſee them?" "I prevailed upon them, and Mr. Nowel, to take a ride," replied the dutcheſs, "as I thought it would be leſs diſagreeable to Miſs Sidney if I received her alone, as we were all ſtrangers to her; but I muſt

muſt tell you, that my companions have exerted all their powers of entertainment to amuſe me in your abſence; they have alternately read, ſung, played, and converſed, and, by the amiable tempers they poſſeſs, have rendered themſelves equally the objects of my affection." "This harmony," anſwered the duke, "conſtitutes the greateſt felicity of my life; may it ever continue." The dutcheſs then rang for tea, ſaying, "it was time the travellers ſhould have ſome refreſhment after their journey." As ſoon as the ſervants had obeyed her orders, lord Charles entered the room; he was a blooming youth, of about eighteen, freſh as the opening morn, gay as the ſeaſon of his life, with a mien open and noble as his birth; his eye was fixed, not rudely, on the beauteous ſtranger, while he addreſſed himſelf to the duke. "My dear boy," ſaid his father, "you're well encountered, I rejoice to ſee you; but where is your brother and Mr. Nowel?" The queſtion was ſcarcely aſked, and not anſwered, ere they appeared. Lord Huntley, the ſon of a former marriage, and ſeveral years older than lord Charles, was

"Tall as the pine amidſt inferior trees,
"With all the bending oziers pliant care."

His ride had diſhevelled his hair, and printed his cheek with the vivid glow of health, his dark hazel eyes betrayed the movements of his ſoul, and his voice broke on the ears with ſounds of the fulleſt melody. When he had ſpoken to the duke, he turned to the dutcheſs and ſaid, "will you, madam, do me the favour of introducing me to your friend?"—"Moſt certainly, my dear Henry," replied ſhe, "and I hope my ſweet Helena will become dear as a ſiſter to you, for ſhe is my adopted

adopted daughter." Helena bluſhed, and lord Huntley anſwered, "if Miſs Sidney will permit me to aſſume the relationſhip you promiſe me, I ſhall be moſt happy." "I think," returned the dutcheſs ſmiling, "I ſhall find no great difficulty in forming that bond of friendſhip between two ſo dear to me." Helena replied, "your grace and lord Huntley do me honor, but I know not how I ſhall diſcharge the duties of a ſiſter, never having been bleſſed with ſo intereſting a connexion." "I will anſwer for your performing every duty with grace and propriety," ſaid lord Huntley, whoſe countenance bore teſtimony to the truth and ſincerity of his expreſſions. "Am I," cried lord Charles, "to be excluded from my ſhare of ſiſterly affection? I ſhall certainly quarrel with you," continued he to Helena, "the moment we become acquainted, if you do not diſtribute your regard equally." Helena, with the ſmile of pleaſure, anſwered his threat, with all the modeſty of unaſſuming gentleneſs; and before the cloſe of the evening, found herſelf more acquainted with every individual of the family, than ſhe could have ſuppoſed a month would have accompliſhed. Mr. Nowel, lord Charles's tutor, was a well-bred, ſenſible man, and treated with that reſpect and attention which was due to him as a gentleman, and a man whoſe learning and abilities had rendered the ſupports of an antient and noble houſe, an ornament to their family, country, and ſituation. Helena was entertained and improved by his converſation, and gratified by his attention; and her mind and underſtanding being naturally ſuperior, and enlarged by a careful education, rendered her capable

capable of receiving and profiting by the ſociety and precepts of a family, in all reſpects amiable.

CHAP. VI.

WHEN the hour of ſeparation arrived for that night, the dutcheſs turning to Helena ſaid: "Come, my dear, we will leave the men to ſettle the national affairs by themſelves, and I will conduct you to an apartment you are from this moment to look upon as your own; it ſhall be ſacred to your uſe, and whenever you wiſh to avoid company, you may be perfectly retired there." Helena, after the uſual compliments on parting, followed to her new lodging, which was in the ſame gallery with the apartment of the dutcheſs. The firſt was an elegant dreſſing-room, furniſhed with great taſte: here ſhe found books, muſic, implements for drawing, writing, &c. her bed-chamber was through it, and here her accommodation had been equally regarded. The dutcheſs then wiſhing her good night, told her ſhe might either have her breakfaſt in her own dreſſing-room, or join the party in the breakfaſt parlour at ten o'clock.

Helena, when alone, had leiſure to reflect on the happineſs of her ſituation; and, while ſhe ſtill continued to lament and revere the memory of her mother, ſhe felt grateful to heaven, which had placed her in a family whoſe virtues, rather than

than their rank, commanded her reſpect; her youthful heart, warmed by a kindneſs ſo ſalutary, admitted no doubt of a worthineſs ſo conſpicuous; and, though time could have given her as yet no right to pronounce on characters ſo new to her, the energy of youth ſupplied the place of experience, and gratitude prompted her to beſtow her eſteem where ſo much benevolence, and more than politeneſs, ſeemed juſtly to demand it. In a few minutes ſhe diſmiſſed her maid, and cloſed her eyes in a peaceful ſlumber; and her active and innocent imagination conveyed her on the wings of fancy to bliſsful and flowery regions, and where the hopes for the future, and reflections on the paſt, were alike forgot.

CHAP. VII.

ABOUT eight Helena aroſe, and opening the ſhutters, diſcovered that her room commanded an extenſive proſpect of the country, and immediately overlooked the park and plantations, where art and nature had happily united to enrich and beautify the ſcene; and at a ſmall diſtance ſhe diſcovered, through the trees, a row of neat white cottages, which from their ſituation muſt belong to the Caſtle. The manſion, ſhe was now an inhabitant of, was ſpacious and magnificent; though not modern, and all around it proclaimed the liberality and extenſive poſſeſſions of the owner.

By

By the time Helena had aſſiſted her maid to unpack her cloaths, and ſhe had equipped herſelf, it was paſt nine; ſhe therefore bent her way to the breakfaſt parlour, which ſhe found empty, but all appeared prepared for its ſoon being occupied; ſhe took up a book that was on the table, to amuſe herſelf till ſome one ſhould approach, but ſhe had ſcarcely turned over two leaves ere lord Charles entered, exclaiming, "good morrow to my ſweet ſiſter, you look like the bright goddeſs of day emerging from a cloud; I ſhall" continued he, "be much mortified if I find you have long been here by yourſelf; I ſhould have deſerted the antients to converſe with modern beauties, and left Mr. Nowel to ſtudy by himſelf, could I have gueſſed who was in the parlour: has Huntley been here? but no, 'tis impoſſible, though he is a melancholy jaques, he never would have left your ſociety for a ſolitary ramble." "Lord Huntley has not been here ſince I came into the room," replied Helena, "but I have not been quite alone, my lord," ſaid ſhe, holding up the book. "I could burn that book," anſwered lord Charles, "for its inſenſibility of the happineſs conferred upon it; pray throw it aſide, and make a book of me; you can't think what a fund of entertainment you will find in me, and you can have no idea of the pleaſure you will beſtow." Helena laughed while lord Charles diſplayed his good-humoured gaiety, and in the midſt of his lively airs lord Huntly came in. "What, Charles, are you playing monkey tricks to charm Miſs Sidney?"—"your lordſhip's moſt obedient," ſaid his brother, bowing affectedly; "Your cold formality will much more effectually charm her without

without doubt; ſhe is my ſweet little ſiſter Helena, and if you come with a long face and profound reſpect, hoping Miſs Sidney is well, I ſhall do no ſuch thing I can aſſure you; I believe it will be ſome time before ſhe recovers the ſhock of your frigidity." Lord Huntley ſmiled, and addreſſing himſelf to Helena, ſaid, "you ſee how ſoon we take advantage of your condeſcenſion; but I intreat you not to think me quite ſo mad as this young gentleman; I ſhall, I aſſure you, be much eaſier reproved, when too familiar, a gentle admonition will be ſufficient; but I may, without incurring the imputation of formality, venture to inquire after your health, I ſhall be happy to have a confirmation from your own mouth of the hopes your looks give me, that you are well." Helena anſwered theſe enquiries as they deſerved, and immediately after the duke and dutcheſs joined the party, and took their places at the breakfaſt table, where Helena was deputed to preſide.

CHAP. VIII.

WHEN breakfaſt was over, the dutcheſs, turning to Helena, aſked her, if ſhe had any objection to take a ride with her; but deſired, if it was not perfectly what ſhe liked, that ſhe would not go out of compliment. Helena anſwered, "that ſhe ſhould not deſert a ſociety where ſhe was ſo happy, when permitted to continue in it," and

and prepared to attend the dutcheſs, who had ordered her carriage; the gentlemen's horſes being alſo ready, they ſeparated for the morning. The dutcheſs and Helena proceeded to the white cottages, where a ſchool was ſupported by the former, and a comfortable aſylum afforded the aged and infirm a calm retreat from poverty and diſtreſs: their kind and excellent patroneſs encouraged the induſtry of the young, and protected the old from neglect, rendering each ſeaſon of life happy by her bounty and well-directed attention. When this daily viſit was paid, they again got into the carriage, and the dutcheſs ordered her attendants to drive round the grounds home. In the courſe of this ride, Helena was confirmed in the opinion ſhe had formed of the virtues and underſtanding of her companion, whoſe manners were thoſe adopted by a refined and elegant mind in an intercourſe with the polite world; and while ſhe had carefully given the higheſt poliſh to qualities of the moſt valuable kind, and added grace and dignity to a perſon naturally engaging, ſhe had cultivated the virtues heaven had implanted in her boſom with the utmoſt diligence; and at the moment that ſhe preſented a woman of the firſt rank, and of the moſt finiſhed addreſs, the eye of a ſtranger might diſcover the benignant ſpirit of truth and benevolence. On this model of human perfection, Helena formed her own character; and in every ſtage of life ſhe proved, that ſhe had not been miſtaken in her choice, or incapable of copying the good example before her; it was from a laudable ambition to reſemble the ſhining virtues of her friend, that ſhe was enabled to perform the difficult taſk aſſigned her,

and

and conduct herſelf with a becoming dignity and reſignation through the many changes ſhe was doomed to experience: from her ſhe caught the ſteady, conſtant, pure, and holy flame of religion, as free from the enthuſiaſm of a fanatic, as the languor of indifference; and as it regulated her actions it ſhone with mild luſtre, and gave ſtability and conſiſtency to her character.

On their return home, Helena accompanied the dutcheſs into her dreſſing-room, where they read till it was time to dreſs for dinner. When the whole family were again aſſembled, a chearfulneſs, without levity, marked the fleeting hours; and ſo much were they pleaſed with each other, that the gentlemen deſired an early ſummons to the tea-table, till which time the dutcheſs and Helena were left to converſe. The modeſty and ſenſe which diſplayed themſelves in the latter, inſpired her noble friend with an affectionate regard for her; there was a natural propriety in all her reflexions which ſtamped them with weight, and a ſimple elegance in all ſhe ſaid and did, that ſpoke the purity of her mind and ſentiments much more than the moſt ſtudied addreſs, while a collected ſteadineſs of temper was blended with ſo much gentleneſs, that the approbation and eſteem of thoſe who knew her could not be withheld from her; and nature ſeemed to have formed her, in all reſpects, to ſhew the world that her ſimple charms can ſurpaſs the powers of art, affectation, or any and every adventitious aid; that native truth and elegance will always riſe ſuperior "to faſhion's pert tricks, and all the poor parade of taudry dreſs," which her votaries ſubſtitute for nature's modeſt taſte.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

WHEN tea was announced, the duke, his ſons, and Mr. Nowel, entered the ſaloon; Helena took the office of tea-maker on herſelf, and the ſervants were diſmiſſed, to baniſh form. When this repaſt was at an end, a walk was propoſed, and all but the dutcheſs ſallied forth: the duke charged his ſons to be careful of Helena, and not fatigue her; he then ſet out with Mr. Nowel, to take a ſtrole, and left the young party to themſelves. Lord Charles replied to his father's caution, "don't fear, my lord, we will conduct our ſiſter to flowery paths alone, and reſtore her ſafe—I anſwer for both Huntley and myſelf; but pray, Harry, why don't you let us hear what gallant and ſmart things you can ſay on this occaſion?" "My dear Charles," ſaid his brother, "you are quite ſmart enough for both of us; but, without any attempt to leave the common road of expreſſion, I will venture to promiſe, that our ſweet ſiſter ſhall return ſafe, and that I am moſt happy in being allowed to offer my ſervices to guard her from danger." Helena, attended ſo well, ſet forward on her walk, in which ſhe was directed and entertained by her companions; the ſprightly humour of lord Charles was agreeably contraſted with the more manly converſation of lord Huntley, whoſe genius ſhone with as warm, though a milder luſtre, on all he uttered; his delicacy and refinement were conſpicuous; he choſe ſuch ſub-

jects

jects as proved that his ſenſe was ſolid, his accompliſhments brilliant, and his heart the centre of truth and ſenſibility, of humanity and honor. The fineneſs of the evening, on which the ſetting ſun beſtowed a golden ſky, tempted them to prolong a ramble ſo ſalutary to health, ſo ſoothing to the ſpirit, ſo tranquil and delightful; and they reached the caſtle juſt as the laſt ray of light glanced on the world. The evening, the morning, and every hour, endeared Helena to her new friends, and enlarged her gratitude to the beneficent power whoſe goodneſs had ſo confirmed her happineſs. The family party was ſometimes broken in upon by viſitors, and viſiting; but theſe interruptions only ſerved to heighten the enjoyment of ſocial intercourſe. Lord Charles, in order to celebrate the nuptials of his nurſe's daughter, on whom he beſtowed a fortune ſuitable to her ſtation and neceſſities, projected a rural ball, to which ſome of thoſe neighbouring families, with whom they were on terms of intimacy, were invited: Lord Huntley's early choice fell on Helena, as a partner in the two firſt dances, when, to her infinite ſurprize and embarraſſment, he declared his paſſion for her in the moſt tender, reſpectful and unequivocal manner. She had, indeed, perceived that he ſought all opportunities of converſing with her, ever ſince ſhe entered the ſame houſe; but his appellation of ſiſter, which he always made uſe of when addreſſing her, had concealed from her obſervation his intention, and ſhe had almoſt begun to conſider herſelf in that degree of relationſhip to him; nothing then could equal her aſtoniſhment, when he profeſſed himſelf her lover, and urged her to pronounce a favourable

ſentence

ſentence on his avowal. A variety of new ſenſations ruſhed at once upon her mind, and kept her ſilent, till rouſed by his repeated intreaties to ſpeak, ſhe enumerated her obligations to his family, as powerful reaſons to prevent her encouraging a regard, which, while it conferred the higheſt honor upon her, ſhe was yet in gratitude obliged to decline. Lord Huntley combated her reſolution, and at length ſo far overcame it, that ſhe conſented to conſider herſelf engaged to him, provided the conſent of the duke could be obtained. When this point was amicably ſettled they were obliged to ſeparate; Helena to perform an engagement to dance with another gentleman, and lord Huntley to ſeek a partner for himſelf. Helena was pleaſed, confuſed, and abſent; lord Huntley's ſpirits were more than uſually great, and his eyes told Helena ſhe was the miſtreſs of his thoughts: when he came to turn her in the dance, his lingering ſtep forgot the time, and unwillingly he purſued the figure and returned to his partner.

CHAP. X.

A NEW and perplexing train of ideas now opened themſelves to the mind of Helena; and that ſhe had raſhly conſented to form an engagement, without having the ſanction of thoſe friends to whom ſhe owed every thing, without having any claim that ſhe knew of to their kindneſs, was

not the leaſt of her concern for this clandeſtine attachment; and while the rectitude of her principles pointed out to her the impropriety and ingratitude of ſuch a conduct, an affection, as warm as it was diſintereſted, filled her boſom, and grew ſtronger each moment. Lord Huntley, eager to prove the ſincerity of his love, let no opportunity eſcape him of teſtifying it by every delicate method he could deviſe, and to the penetrating eye of love, each day proclaimed an increaſe of affection. In this ſituation of affairs, the ſummer, or rather the autumn, inſenſibly declined, and Helena could form no other reſolution, than a determination never to incur the diſpleaſure of the duke and dutcheſs, by a wilful breach of their expreſs commands; and though ſhe could not diveſt herſelf of a fear, that they would not conſider her as a proper match for lord Huntley, yet the affectionate regard they both diſplayed towards her, ſometimes gave her a hope that things would turn out better than ſhe could expect; and, when melancholy, from reflexions of a more gloomy caſt, ſhe ever found that balm ſo healing to a wounded ſpirit, in the converſe, the tender regard, of her amiable lover, whoſe every thought was directed to ſecure her felicity.

A ſhort time before the removal of the family from Barnhurſt Caſtle to Clevedon Houſe in town, Helena, together with lord Huntley and lord Charles, received an invitation from ſir Thomas and lady White, to a ball; it was accepted; and, as the dutcheſs never attended any amuſements, either public or private, on account of her health, a near neighbour, and a friend of hers was deſired to be of the party, by way of chaperone.

chaperone. Helena's dreſs on this, as well as every other occaſion, was expreſſive of the elegant ſimplicity of her taſte; and in the delighted countenance of lord Huntley ſhe might have read the admiration which was viſible to all the company. She was a ſtranger to the lady of the houſe, and was therefore introduced as a near relation of the duke's, which, together with her own perſon and manners, procured her reſpect and attention from a brilliant aſſemblage of polite company.

She had not been long ſeated, before lady White approached, along with a nobleman, whom ſhe introduced to Helena by the title of lord Farnham. After this accuſtomed ceremony was over, he entered into converſation with her, and diſplayed a good deal of wit and vivacity in the ſubjects he choſe to entertain her with; he requeſted the honor of her hand for the two firſt dances; ſhe was engaged to lord Huntley. "The ſecond then," ſaid he, "may I hope you are diſengaged?" ſhe was, and promiſed to be his partner. His expreſſive eyes had declared how much he was ſtruck with her, the moment ſhe entered; and his pointed attention, the inſtant etiquette was obeyed, by a formal introduction, proved, that his admiration was not momentary: he placed himſelf by her, and never quitted his poſt, till lord Huntley came to claim his partner, and inform her the dancing was begun. She roſe, and giving him her hand, a conſcious bluſh overſpread her face, and pleaſure gave freſh animation to her features: this emotion did not eſcape lord Farnham, who was no novice in the language of love.

CHAP

CHAP. XI.

LORD Farnham, having obſerved the pleaſure that ſparkled in the eyes of lord Huntley, as well as in his fair partner's, felt a reſtleſs curioſity for which he could not himſelf account, to dive into the ſentiments of a ſtranger, for ſuch Helena was to him as well as to moſt of the company. For the purpoſe of gratifying himſelf he contrived to ſtand next her in the ſet, and attended much more minutely to her converſation and lord Huntley's than to his own partner's; they could not avoid perceiving his obſervation, and joined in a wiſh that he had been placed at a greater diſtance; he frequently addreſſed his converſation to Helena in the courſe of the two dances, and ſo entirely deranged them both, that they were obliged to relinquiſh the pleaſure of a converſe ſo intereſting and ſo ſacred. At the end of the ſecond dance they ſat down, hoping to eſcape him, but he was not to be ſhook off, when inclination prompted him to purſue any object; he ſtood before them, and talked away, without appearing to ſee that his company was rather troubleſome than acceptable to them, in the midſt of a general diſcourſe, which naturally followed, the obſtinate perſeverance of a third perſon to break in upon and diſturb two people, who evidently wiſhed to be ſeparate from the reſt of the company. Lord Charles approached, and accuſed Helena of idleneſs; "I will not allow you," continued he,

"to

"to ſit down, when you are my partner, my dear ſiſter." "What," replied lord Farnham, willing perfectly to underſtand the meaning of the title lord Charles had given Helena, "does your lordſhip intend to introduce the faſhion of brother and ſiſter dancing together? I think, unleſs every man was bleſſed with ſuch a ſiſter, (bowing to Helena) you will find it difficult to eſtabliſh ſo ſingular a cuſtom." "I grant, my lord," anſwered lord Charles, "that as few men are ſo fortunate as myſelf in this inſtance, I ſhall not be likely to make many converts;

But common rules were ne'er deſign'd
Directors of a noble mind.

You muſt allow," continued he, laughing, "the truth and juſtice of theſe lines to be fully exemplified in me; ſo my ſweet little nonpareil of a ſiſter I crave the honor of your fair hand, that we may ſhew thoſe good people what dancing is." "This lady has done me the honor," replied lord Farnham, "of accepting me for a partner in the next dances, and 'tis a happineſs I impatiently expect." "I fear, my lord," ſaid his lively competitor, "I muſt relinquiſh my claim in favour of your foreſight, which prompted you to take the opportunity of engaging the ſly little enemy of our peace, before we could approach her; but beware, my lord, beware of the poiſon that darts from her eye, for, if it once invade you, 'twill be vain to hope a cure." "Indeed," replied Helena, "I did not expect that you would give me ſo bad a character; I am tempted to apply that old adage which ſays, that we bring our greateſt enemy from home." Lord Farnham ſaid, that he was fully ſenſible of his danger, but

found it impoſſible to fly, "and, if I miſtake not," continued he, "I only ſhare in the ruin;" and he glanced a ſignificant look upon lord Huntley, who anſwered, "I think your lordſhip has deſerved the fate you have provoked; for, like an imprudent general, you have purſued the defeat that threatened the firſt onſet." "You have made a moſt tremendous creature of me," ſaid Helena, riſing to obey the ſignal for renewing the ſet: lord Farnham accompanied her, and lord Huntley and his brother walked away. Helena, during her engagement with this noble lord, was obliged to ſubmit to his pointed obſervations and aſſiduous endeavours to render himſelf agreeable to her, a circumſtance he could have little doubt of, from the general ſucceſs that attended him, when converſing with every other woman: but here he was diſappointed; for the unprejudiced diſcernment of his partner diſcovered that vanity was the ruling principle of his lordſhip's mind and actions; and, while ſhe felt diſguſted at the complimentary ſtrain of his diſcourſe, ſhe moſt heartily deſpiſed the motive which procured her the notice of this faſhionable Adonis; for it was certain, that lord Farnham was endowed by nature with an engaging exterior, nor was he deſtitute of underſtanding.

At ſupper, though Lord Huntley ſat on one ſide of Helena, lord Farnham placed himſelf on the other; and if ſhe had not felt teaſed by the conſtant and confident attention of a man ſhe diſliked, the evening would have ended rather pleaſantly than otherwiſe; for his remarks were juſt and entertaining; and ſhe was forced, in oppoſition to a gravity ſhe reſolved to maintain, to approve

prove ſome of his ſallies, by a riſibility it was impoſſible to control. She was not however ſorry, when the lady ſhe came with roſe to return home, and lord Huntley moſt willingly led her to the carriage. Fatigue was an impediment to converſation; and the party in the coach almoſt ſilently ſet down their companion, and proceeded to the caſtle, where they enjoyed ſweet repoſe, augmented by the exerciſe each had taken in the courſe of the evening.

CHAP. XII.

THE day now approached, on which the duke and dutcheſs had fixed for a removal of the family from Barnhurſt Caſtle to London; winter had ſhed its hoary mantle on the world, and converted the lively ſcenes of ſummer, and the rich and variegated face of autumn into a dreary waſte; warning ſuch as preferred the buſy hum of men, the noiſy city, or the brilliant court, to be gone, and leave the deſolated country to theſe, whom inclination, circumſtance, or convenience, fixed in retirement. Helena was with the reſt tranſported in a ſhort time to Clevedon Houſe; where an apartment, equally elegant with that ſhe had occupied at Barnhurſt Caſtle, was allotted her. She was now on the point of entering a ſcene of life perfectly novel to her; her education had been begun and finiſhed in the country; where, though

her companions were of ſufficient rank and fortune, to baniſh the vulgarity of the lower order of people, yet they could give her but a very faint idea of the manners and cuſtoms of the ton; a leſſon ſhe could not learn at Barnhurſt Caſtle; becauſe its inhabitants preferred the plain but elegant manners of good ſenſe, which, upon a minute obſervation, will be found to have little or no affinity to ton. She had much to acquire in the vocabulary of faſhion; and, if ſhe had thought it neceſſary to become a votary to that fickle deity, it would have proved a work of time, to undo all that Nature, in her bounty, had done for her: for ſo little reſemblance is there to be found between them, that the beauties, the graces, and perfections of one, muſt be relinquiſhed to preſerve the other. Helena, however, having the example of a woman of the firſt rank, and one univerſally reſpected and admired, conſtantly before her, together with her own excellent underſtanding to direct her, fell not into the extreme of the reigning faſhion, but contented herſelf with a very moderate ſhare of the graces beſtowed by the goddeſs of whim. Preparations were immediately made by the dutcheſs, for the entrance of her young friend into the world, with all that eclat her own merits demanded, and her ſituation and relationſhip to the duke, made neceſſary. Lady Egerton, a woman of character, and of an extenſive acquaintance, was choſen by the dutcheſs to introduce Miſs Sidney; who, together with lord Huntley, accompanied her to all public places. Lord Charles and Mr. Nowel having taken leave for the preſent to reſide at Cambridge, where the former

former went to finiſh his ſtudies, and the latter attended him as tutor and friend.

CHAP. XIII.

THE firſt appearance Helena made in public was at the opera; and the firſt perſon ſhe encountered was lord Farnham; whoſe pleaſure at ſeeing her, was diſplayed, not only in expreſſions of joy, but countenance. He ſaid every thing that politeneſs could dictate on the occaſion; and, being perfectly acquainted with lady Egerton, made himſelf one of the party. Helena was delighted with the muſic, to which ſhe liſtened with as much attention as her talkative neighbours would allow; but, as a repetition of every part of the performance had rendered it almoſt inſipid to lord Farnham, he made ſeveral attempts to diſengage the mind of Helena from what paſſed upon the ſtage; but the novelty, the variety, the harmony, and the activity exhibited there, entertained her much more than the converſation of a man who forced himſelf upon her attention. Lord Huntley had been unavoidably engaged in converſation with ſeveral gentlemen and ladies, ſo that Helena had little of his company during the evening. When the dancing was over, they, following the ſtream, went into the coffee-room; to which place lord Farnham conducted Helena, while lord Huntley took care of lady Egerton. Some gentlemen

tlemen who ſtood near them, aſked lord Farnham if he had ever ſeen the dance better performed? "Upon my ſoul!" replied his Lordſhip, "I have ſeen but one object this evening; could I beſtow my attention and admiration on a ſet of people throwing themſelves into ridiculous attitudes, when a divinity was placed within my view." This warmth of expreſſion attracted the notice of the party to whom it was addreſſed; and the ſpeaker's eyes directed them for an explanation to Helena; ſhe had overheard him, and was quite confuſed by the ſpeech, as well as the accurate ſurvey of the whole ſet who had heard it. Lady Egerton was very deep in converſation with ſome of her acquaintance; and, as Helena could not quit the place without her, ſhe was obliged to undergo a diſtreſſing enquiry of the eyes, as well as tongues of an inquiſitive ſet of people, whom neither good manners nor good nature reſtrained from gratifying themſelves at her expence. At length her chaperone was diſengaged, and they retired, to the no ſmall relief of Helena, who was equally rejoiced, to leave a diſagreeable crowd, and the man whoſe abſurd behaviour had drawn ſo many eyes upon her. When ſhe compared his conduct with lord Huntley's, how did the character of the latter riſe upon her; and how much did the other loſe by the compariſon: the admiration of one was ſilent, delicate, and inſinuating; that of the other diſtreſſing, loud and offenſive. The next evening the papers announced Mrs. Siddons, in the character of Belvidera; and Helena, eager to behold this greatly and juſtly admired actreſs, accepted lady Egerton's invitation to accompany her to the theatre. At the uſual

hour,

hour, that lady called upon her; and lord Huntley alſo took a place in her carriage. Helena was placed between her two companions, in a front ſeat; and could not help congratulating herſelf on the abſence of lord Farnham; when, hearing the box door open, ſhe involuntarily turned to look who came in, and beheld the very man ſhe had flattered herſelf was not in the houſe. He placed himſelf behind her, and joined in the converſation till Mrs. Siddons appeared. Then attention was chained to the ſtage, where the united powers of voice, countenance, grace, and energy, called forth by turns each paſſion of the audience. 'Tis her's to rouſe the moſt dormant, or melt the moſt inflexible ſoul;

"With matchleſs ſkill,
"To turn and rend the paſſions at her will."

CHAP. XIV.

THE feelings of Helena were wrought up to agony, and viſibly paid that tribute to the merit of Mrs. Siddons, ſhe ſo well deſerves. Lord Farnham exclaimed as her tears fell, "Oh thoſe precious drops! who would not really ſuffer torture to be ſo lamented!" "My lord," replied Helena, "can you talk when Mrs. Siddons is acting?" "Can I be ſilent, you ſhould rather aſk me, when I behold you diſplay the moſt captivating

vating ſenſibility?" returned he. By not anſwering him, and intereſting herſelf in the play, he could find no other opportunity of ſpeaking, till it was over; and then ſhe intreated lady Egerton's leave to go home: it was granted; and lord Huntley went to order the coach to be called up. No ſooner had that nobleman left his ſeat, than it was occupied by lord Farnham, who did not omit the opportunity of the abſence of his too much favoured rival, to endeavour to render himſelf as agreeable to Helena. She liſtened with a great degree of patience; and almoſt reſolved to ſhun thoſe places of public reſort, where a meeting with him was unavoidable. Lord Huntley, however, ſoon relieved her from her troubleſome neighbour, by his return to inform her, that the coach was ready: he took her hand to convey her to it, and they found themſelves quickly ſeated at ſupper in Clevedon Houſe, where the evening concluded with harmony.

CHAP. XV.

WHEN Helena and lord Huntley were gone, lord Farnham took one of the vacant ſeats, and entered into converſation with lady Egerton, in praiſe of the fair ſtranger, whoſe beauty, accompliſhments, and blindneſs to the merits lord Farnham's vanity told him he poſſeſſed, were equally the ſubject of that nobleman's thoughts: he

he enquired if lady Egerton knew who ſhe was; and particularly, whether a matrimonial connection between her and lord Huntley was likely to take place. That lady was as ignorant as himſelf of the birth or ſituation (in the Clevedon family) of Helena; ſhe only knew that ſhe was careſſed by them with parental fondneſs, and acknowleged as a relation; as to any engagement between lord Huntley and her, ſhe had never heard it; and his behaviour in public was that of an affectionate brother to an amiable ſiſter, which he conſtantly ſtiled Helena. Lord Farnham had taken notice of this, and built hopes for himſelf upon it. Lady Egerton ſmiled at lord Farnham's curioſity about the lovely Helena; and he declared that he would marry her to-morrow, little as he knew of her real character or condition. "But," replied that lady, "ſhould lord Huntley, dropping the title of brother, aſſume that of lover, and diſpute the prize with your lordſhip, do you not think he would be ſucceſsful?" "How cruel are you," returned he, "to deſtroy my hopes by ſuch a ſuggeſtion; I rather think I ſhould blow his brains out firſt, and then my own, ſooner than ſee him united to the too charming Helena." Lady Egerton laughed at this half ſerious declaration of war, and ſaid, "you are perfectly right, my lord.

"Such Helen was, then who can blame
the boy,
"That in ſo bright a flame conſum'd his
Troy."

But come," continued ſhe, "ſince the fair Helena is not here, may I requeſt your lordſhip

to conduct me in ſafety to my carriage?" She roſe; and he having ſaid he ſhould be happy in the honor, handed her down; and having wiſhed her a good night, flew to forget his love and miſtreſs, in the company of a ſet of convivial friends. Temperance was not amongſt the virtues of the peer; but wine proved too weak to remove the paſſion of love from his heart, though its ſtrength had overpowered his ſenſes for a time. The next morning he was tormented with a headach, together with a reſtleſs deſire to ſupplant lord Huntley, to whom the fine eyes of her whom he adored were directed, with a ſweet but animated expreſſion in them. He reſolved (after ſeveral ſtruggles with himſelf to forget her) to purſue and conquer, if art or invention could aid him; and he was already poſſeſſed of attractions ſufficient to win the hearts of the larger half of the women in the kingdom—high rank—a princely fortune—a handſome perſon—and elegant accompliſhments: but to his ſurpriſe theſe had all failed to inſpire Helena with a paſſion like his own, which received its birth almoſt the firſt moment he beheld her. He would not however deſpair, having ſo often ſucceeded.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

HELENA had now been more than a month in London; where by turns ſhe had been elevated and depreſſed, charmed and diſguſted: but the innocence of her own mind, which ſhrunk from the depravity ſhe could not avoid ſeeing and hearing of, afforded her, when her reflections turned upon herſelf, that ſweet peace, the offspring of virtue, which dwells only with the good, and is cheriſhed by truth and honor. Her acquaintances were numerous, her intimates few; not that the cold caution of age prevented her forming a friendſhip with ſome of her own ſex; but, amidſt the diſſipation which ſurrounded her, ſhe could diſcover no one woman, whoſe character, as far as ſhe could judge, gave her any hopes of meeting with a heart ſincere as her own; an underſtanding to ſeparate folly from rational amuſement; or ſtability enough to preſerve inviolate the ſacred bond of friendſhip, free from the caprice of youth, the extravagance of affectation, paſſion and weakneſs, or the caba's and ſcandal of modern friendſhips. She contented herſelf then with the common forms of politeneſs; and converſed with the young ladies ſhe frequently met in company, on the occurrences of the day; feeling, that to attempt a more ſenſible and intereſting ſtyle of converſation, would, while it expoſed their ignorance, create their contempt; and only ſerve to mortify herſelf, by a failure in her deſign. The

animation

animation and intelligence of her own mind, when in theſe inſipid parties, ſometimes wanted objects to exerciſe it; but then her return to Clevedon Houſe, gave her all that refined accompliſhment, ſolid ſenſe and unlimited affection could beſtow; joined to an approbation of her conduct and manners, the moſt flattering. If ever ſhe felt a pang, it was cauſed by a deviation from that openneſs and ſincerity, which marked her character on every other occaſion, in concealing a paſſion, whoſe foundation was virtuous; but which bore the ſtamp of ingratitude and impropriety, from the ſecrecy obſerved. She was ignorant till ſhe came to London, of even the name of vices, which there ſeemed to be not only tolerated, but encouraged. She had once or twice ſeen in the public papers, an account of women who had diſgraced themſelves and families; deſerted their huſbands and children; and reſigned themſelves to infamy; but theſe examples, her native love of virtue, induced her to believe were few; and as ſhe read the tale of vice, ſhe pitied the unhappy victims of a licentious paſſion, heaved a ſigh for the misfortunes ſuch a conduct entails on the wretched object of public, and, ſhe conceived, univerſal contempt; and breathed a wiſh, pious and fervent, for the honor of her ſex, and that it might be no more ſtained, by weak and wicked women. What then was her aſtoniſhment, when almoſt every ſociety in which ſhe was preſent, diſcourſed with indifference on the frequent and ſhameleſs breach of marriage vows, of every law divine and human; ſpoke of intrigues as common incidents; of elopements, as things of courſe; of divorces, as a happy ſeparation of two people who were

were tired of each other, and ſcrupled not, by the vileſt means, to obtain a releaſe from the galling chain of matrimony, put on indeed with a thoughtleſs levity, and a total diſregard of the ſacred duties required. She ſhuddered to hear of a woman, whoſe daring effrontery braved the public cenſure; nay could appear before a court of juſtice, who were to ſit in judgment on her character, and with intrepidity and an unbluſhing face, hear herſelf accuſed of crimes ſhe rather ſought to aggravate than extenuate; nay, would even recapitulate a ſeries of miſconduct, which ſhe ſhould rather have died than been guilty of, and the mention of which ought to have filled her with remorſe and confuſion. Nor did ſhe find more to eſteem in the other ſex; for almoſt all ſhe converſed with and heard admired, ſeemed indeed endowed with a happy confidence in their own powers of pleaſing; but, to Helena, an abſence of every quality which ſhould adorn the mind of man, appeared to be the moſt ſtriking trait in the character of theſe ſons of faſhion; and where the moſt ſhining abilities were beſtowed, report ſpoke of the poſſeſſor as baniſhing his underſtanding, drowning his feelings, and inflaming every bad propenſity at a gaming table, or in an exceſs of wine, diſſipating time and talents, which ought only to be employed for the good of his country.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

BUT whilſt Helena viewed the general depravity which had gone forth; while ſhe lamented the little reſpect paid to virtue and a fair character; ſhe beheld in the man of her heart, a noble aſſemblage of every rare and valuable quality; and her grateful boſom heaved with exceſs of joy, to feel herſelf the choſen friend of the moſt amiable of his ſex—ſhe was the pride, the happineſs of lord Huntley; to him ſhe flies for a relief from the unpleaſant reflections occaſioned by the voice of ſcandal; on him ſhe reſted for ſupport and peace; and he had power to reconcile her to a world, ſhe had almoſt learned to deſpiſe: his loved ſociety was all ſhe coveted; his conduct was a powerful incentive to virtue; for it was gentle, yet animated with a ſpirit, tempered by reaſon and religion; it was mild to inferiors, gracefully condeſcending; and to equals and aſſociates, open, ſenſible, and intereſting. Such was the man ſhe hoped to ſpend her days with. Amongſt the families Helena had been early introduced to, and whom the dutcheſs as well as lady Egerton viſited, was ſir James Sundan's: lady Frances Sundan was lord Farnham's ſiſter; and, but for that cauſe, Helena would have found pleaſure in cultivating an intimacy with her; for, though too much devoted to diſſipation, lady Frances was unaffected, good-humoured, and lively, and had taken a particular fancy to Helena;

Helena; but the regard ſhe profeſſed, was not founded on a thorough knowledge of a character and virtues which could have juſtified it, but on a partial and lover-like deſcription of lord Farnham; a repreſentation which was ſufficient to create a deſire in his ſiſter to be known to her; particularly as it was his wiſh to bring about an acquaintance, that might afford him many opportunities of ſeeing and converſing with the fair Helena. This very circumſtance, which Helena ſaw muſt be the conſequence of her friendſhip, or even frequent viſits to lady Frances, prevented both: and ſhe preſerved a degree of reſerve not natural to her, wherever ſhe met that lady: but, like her brother, lady Frances determined to conquer by perſevering; and left no method untried to get the better of Helena's diſtant return to all her advances. For this purpoſe, ſhe called often at Clevedon Houſe, propoſing a walk, or inviting Helena to join ſome party to a public entertainment, or a ſelect ſociety at her own houſe. As long as it was poſſible, ſhe declined accepting any of her invitations; as ſhe knew that lord Farnham always made one of every party: but one day, when lord Huntley was gone out of town for a ſhort time, and the duke was engaged, lady Frances came to pay a morning viſit; in the courſe of which, ſhe intreated the intereſt of the dutcheſs to prevail on Helena to make one of a pleaſant and ſmall ſet of friends, who were to ſpend that day with her: ſhe apologized for the ſhortneſs of the notice; "but," continued ſhe, "I knew if I ſent a card I ſhould be refuſed; for Miſs Sidney has ſeldom favoured me with her company, when I have been moſt anxious for it." She ſmiled on

Helena,

Helena, who could not excuſe herſelf; but, with the concurrence of the dutcheſs, who urged her to it, ſhe promiſed to accept the preſent invitation. When lady Frances had ſucceeded to her wiſh, ſhe took her leave; and Helena at a proper time retired to dreſs; a taſk ſhe felt little inclined to perform; as ſhe reluctantly obeyed the dictates of good manners, in conſenting to ſpend the day at ſir James Sundan's. When the coach was ready, ſhe took leave of the dutcheſs; and, with ſome degree of the vexation ſhe felt painted on her face, ſhe proceeded to her viſit, and the ſhortneſs of the way gave her no time to overcome it; ſo that when the carriage ſtopped, ſhe got out with a tardy motion; and the firſt perſon ſhe ſaw was lord Farnham.

CHAP. XVIII.

HE met her at the door of the apartment; and, in his uſual complimentary ſtyle, accoſted her. She returned his civilities coldly; and entered the room, where ſir James and lady Frances were alone. But he was not to be diſcouraged; and notwithſtanding all her efforts to avoid any particular converſation with him, ſhe was at length obliged to yield to his importunity, and patiently ſuffer herſelf to be the ſole object of his attention, though ſhe was not a little provoked at his ſiſter, for her duplicity in ſaying ſhe was to meet a par-

ty,

ty, and no other perſon appeared. They ſat down to dinner, only four: but, as nothing could exceed the attentive politeneſs of all the three, to render her ſituation pleaſant, ſhe found herſelf under a neceſſity of aſſuming a chearfulneſs, which, tho' natural to her temper, yet ſhe did not then feel: but ſhe had no pretence for being rude, to even lord Farnham, though his aſſiduity was to a painful degree troubleſome to her. The evening confirmed the truth of lady Frances's aſſertion, by bringing in a few friends of both ſexes; and Helena hoping to be relieved from the pointed and conſtant obſervation of lord Farnham, rejoiced to ſee them enter. She imagined that his politeneſs would not ſuffer him to behave as if there was no perſon in the room except herſelf and his ſiſter; particularly as the ladies were young and handſome. But in this concluſion ſhe was miſtaken; for, beſides that his lordſhip was perfectly acquainted with the company, he never ſacrificed his inclination to propriety or good manners. Cards were propoſed; and Helena, as well as having no taſte for that amuſement, ſuppoſed the game would be high; and ſhe conſidered with a rational benevolence, which actuated all her actions, that the ſum ſhe might loſe, would render ſeveral families happy, who were perhaps ſinking under poverty, and every kind of diſtreſs; ſhe therefore declined playing. Lord Farnham immediately declared he would ſit out too. This ſhe could not ſupport; to be forced into a tete-a-tete with him, entirely got the better of her patience; and ſhe ſaid, if lady Frances would undertake to teach her the game fixed on, ſhe would ſit down to the card table. Lady Frances replied,

ed, that her brother was ſo much greater a proficient, and would take ſo much pleaſure in the employment, that ſhe could not think of depriving him of it; and ſmiling, begged Helena would permit him to be her inſtructor inſtead of herſelf. Helena could not longer diſpute with theſe determined enemies to her ſerenity, ſo quietly took her place, with lord Farnham for her neighbour. Elate with his ſucceſs, he was in high ſpirits; and diſcompoſed Helena ſo much, that ſhe could ſcarcely endure to keep her ſeat. She kept continually reminding him of having undertaken to inſtruct her in the game; and endeavoured to ſtop the torrent of converſation, wholly addreſſed to her in a lower voice, which evidently attracted the notice of the company. When ſhe found this method was vain, ſhe ſeriouſly intreated him to deſiſt, as he moſt cruelly diſtreſſed her; "and beſides," continued ſhe, "my lord, you cannot think it is conſiſtent with common civility, to pay no regard to the reſt of the party; and your behaviour, as well as being very diſagreeable to me, is certainly very rude." "My ſweet, my charming monitor," replied he, fixing his eyes upon her face, "how much more delightful is even a reproof from you, than the moſt divine harmony; but how can you think it poſſible for me, whilſt I behold you, and have the pleaſure of converſing with you, to think of talking to, or bear any other woman; and theſe ladies are ſo full of their own conſequence and beauty, that my ſubmiſſion to the general plaudit, is unneceſſary I can aſſure you." She found it was altogether in vain to oppoſe him, ſo tried to carry it off as well as ſhe could. The dutcheſs had promiſed for her that

ſhe

ſhe would ſtay ſupper, ſo there was no eſcaping; and after having ſpent a day productive of much inquietude to her gentle ſpirit, ſhe returned home at a late hour at night, or rather an early one next morning, much fatigued in both body and mind.

CHAP. XIX.

DURING the abſence of Lord Huntley, Clevedon Houſe did not wear its uſual aſpect, in the opinion of Helena. The days were long and tedious; and though the ſociety of the duke and dutcheſs was ever pleaſing to her, yet there appeared a dulneſs ſhe had never before remarked. She wandered from her own apartment to others, in ſearch of ſomething to intereſt her, but found it not. She could not read; muſic was flat; work inſipid; in ſhort, ſhe was deprived of her better ſelf; and till the return of her faithful friend, ſhe felt a lonely wanderer in the midſt of ſociety. At length he appeared; the ſame delicate, affectionate lover he had left her, and haſtened to preſent himſelf before her. She was alone anxiouſly waiting his arrival; but reſtrained by a juſt ſenſe of delicacy and decorum from ſeeking him. He flew to her, and ventured to ſeal his welcome on her coral lips; the mounting crimſon dyed her cheek,

"And on the ground her fixed regards were caſt."

Lord

Lord Huntley overjoyed to behold all that was lovely in woman, and all that was dear to him at once, had forgotten for an inſtant the reſpect due to a purity he adored; and had, in the ſincerity of his love, and the happineſs of a deſired meeting, ſo greatly confuſed Helena, that ſhe was unable to ſpeak; he in the gentle accent of intreaty, hoped ſhe was not offended. She bluſhed ſtill deeper, but could not anſwer. He took her hand, and exclaimed, "Oh my Helena! let me conjure you to conſent to ſhorten the term in which I am forbid to call you all my own. I will this moment unfold a ſecret, too long kept, (by your command) to my father; and ſolicit him to give me this hand, in addition to a heart, you allow me to hope is not adverſe to my love." "I have," ſaid the ſtill bluſhing Helena, "perſuaded of your honor and affection, ventured to lay my whole heart open to you; and I will not affectedly diſown its dictates; but I beg, I entreat you, not to ſpeak your purpoſe to the duke yet; let me prevail on you to wait ſome favourable time; for I tremble to think of incurring his diſpleaſure; it is my moſt earneſt requeſt that you will not make our engagement known at preſent." Lord Huntley tried to overcome her objections to having the affair diſcloſed, but could not ſucceed; and therefore conſented reluctantly to be directed by her. Helena newly reſtored to the company of a ſenſible, entertaining young man, whoſe whole ſoul was devoted to her, recovered her wonted eaſe and chearfulneſs; and each day began and ended ſerenely happy; and peace ſhed its divine influence over all at Clevedon Houſe. One morning, when the dutcheſs, after a bad night, found herſelf unable

to

to appear at breakfaſt, the duke, lord Huntley, and Helena, ſat down by themſelves. The duke, according to his uſual cuſtom, either rode, or walked out. Lord Huntley and Helena were ſcarcely left alone, ere a ſervant informed his lordſhip, that a gentleman requeſted to ſpeak with him. Helena then remained by herſelf, indulging reflections of the moſt pleaſing kind; when a letter was delivered to her, the contents of which ſoon diſſipated the gay ideas of happineſs that roſe in her mind, and had filled her boſom with a calm delight. Amazement almoſt ſuſpended her faculties as ſhe peruſed it; and it was impoſſible to tell what paſſion was moſt prevalent; for anger, pity, indignation, contempt, and ſcorn, alternately invaded, as the following information unfolded itſelf to her.

CHAP. XX.

LETTER.

To Miſs SIDNEY.

Madam,

HAVING ſeen the God-like effuſions of benevolence beam from your eye, and animate every angelic feature; I venture humbly to implore your

your pity and aſſiſtance; you will ſtart with horror when you know that the wretch who has dared to addreſs you, is an alien from the daughters of virtue, an outcaſt from ſociety, an unfortunate and too guilty female, conſigned to poverty and ſhame, to deſpair and infamy, by her unfeeling ſeducer. I tremble even for you, pure and innocent as you are, ignorant and unſuſpecting of the perfidy of man; and I grieve for the neceſſity I am under, of being the unwelcome relater of the crimes of him, whoſe inſinuating and artful addreſs, has found its way to a heart like yours. What, moſt amiable of women, will be your feelings, with what indignation will you behold the name of Huntley, annexed to an action ſo full of guilt and miſchief, ſo ominous to peace and virtue. When I affirm that lord Huntley is the author of all my calamities, I expoſe myſelf entirely to your reſentment or mercy; for if you communicate the contents of this petition to him, his revenge would deprive me of every ſhadow of hope, which yet lingers to withhold me from an act of deſpair. In the wide world I can find no ſingle individual to whoſe pity I can apply to, or from whom I could hope relief, except yourſelf, madam. O come then! and ſave me from the gulph which opens to ſwallow me. Come, happy as you are, amidſt the ſtorms of fate, bleſſed with conſcious innocence, and unſullied virtue, and reſcue the wretch who ſupplicates your charity; but be quick, or the cold hand of death will have ſeized its prey, and hurried me away with all my crimes paſt and unrepented on my head. Oh help me to reſign my ſoul in peace, through the mercy

of

of a Redeemer! and the miſerable, the unfortunate Caroline, will never ceaſe to pray for you. In ——— ſtreet, No. 7, up three pair of ſtairs, you will behold the moſt forlorn of her ſex; and a ſcene of real diſtreſs and woe, which your imagination could form but a faint picture of. Excuſe the importunity of the wretched; and with your native goodneſs, pity and relieve the almoſt expiring

CAROLINE DANBY.

Helena was for ſome time rendered incapable of judging diſpaſſionately on the contents of this ſhocking letter: at length recovering herſelf a little, ſhe exclaimed, "It cannot be; I will not believe it: its a groſs, unjuſt, malicious accuſation; for lord Huntley is incapable of ſo vile, ſo baſe an action." She rang and enquired for him; but he was gone out. "I would have given him," continued ſhe, as the tears fell from her eye, "an opportunity of clearing himſelf, and puniſhing his calumniator." She ſighed, and could not determine how ſhe ſhould act; till recollecting, that while ſhe deliberated, the unfortunate writer might expire. She roſe up, ſaying to herſelf, "I will go and ſee this daring accuſer; and I will make her own, that ſhe has traduced my Huntley, and baſely injured the moſt amiable of mankind; but I will reſerve her from death if poſſible; and aſſiſt her to regain the path ſhe has ſtrayed from, and which ſhe ſeems deſirous to recover. I will point out to her the guilt of ſullying the character, where virtue and honour are written in letters of gold. I will tell her, that his fame is above the deſtroying breath of ſcandal, and pure and unblemiſhed;

miſhed; and to name lord Huntley and diſhonour together, is a violation of all truth. Theſe reflections ended, ſhe ordered the footman who always attended her, to conduct her to —— ſtreet; and having given him directions to wait for her, and not leave the houſe ſhe ſhould enter, till ſhe came to him, ſet out in ſearch of the unhappy Caroline, impatient to clear lord Huntley's character, and ſave his miſerable accuſer.

CHAP. XXI.

HELENA ſoon arrived at the houſe to which the letter directed her; and having again deſired the ſervant to wait her return to him without quitting the place, ſhe enquired for Caroline, and was conducted by the woman of the houſe to her, in a miſerable garret, which ſhe entered with a mixed ſenſation of anger and compaſſion. A female form preſented itſelf to her ſight; in which the various ſymbols of wretchedneſs were viſible: her face, where the faint traces of beauty yet remained, was pale and ſallow, her eyes ſunk and dead, and her countenance dejected and melancholy. On the entrance of Helena, ſhe made an attempt to riſe from the miſerable remnant of a wretched bed; a ſentiment of ſhame and mortification tinged her hollow cheek with a momentary glow; then left it with the livid hue of death; and unable to ſuſtain either the conflicts of mind

or

or body, ſhe ſunk upon her knees. Helena forgot her reſentment, in her ſenſibility and compaſſion for the ſorrows of the poor ſufferer before her; anger yielded to the ſoul-ſubduing voice of pity; and, advancing towards her, ſhe endeavoured to raiſe her from the floor. "Madam," exclaimed the feeble wretch, in a voice ſcarcely audible, "heaven will reward your goodneſs, I am indeed unworthy; but I have ſeverely felt the puniſhments of vice." Helena knew not how to addreſs her; horror and compaſſion ſhook her frame; till, recollecting that the chief motive of her coming to this ſcene of wretchedneſs and poverty, was to alleviate its pangs, and reſcue the unfortunate from impending death, ſhe rouſed her ſcattered ideas, and controlled her feelings ſufficiently to aſk, "if it was Caroline Danby ſhe ſaw and ſpoke to; and from whom ſhe had received a letter that morning?" "I am that unhappy woman," replied ſhe; "I am the wretched Caroline." Helena took out her purſe, and putting it into her hand, ſaid, "I feel for your deplorable ſituation, and this I hope will contribute to relieve you." Caroline, overcome by her weakneſs and the ſight of a reprieve from almoſt inſtant death, fell motionleſs on the bed. Helena, terrified at the ſight, thought ſhe had really expired, ran down ſtairs, and intreated the woman who had opened the door for her, to haſten up to the aſſiſtance of her lodger; and begged that ſomebody might be diſpatched to procure ſome nouriſhment for her, in caſe ſhe could be recovered. She gave money for that purpoſe; and then, attended by the woman, once more reached the apartment of wretchedneſs. With the help of a cordial, adminiſtered by

Helena's aſſiſtant, Caroline recovered; and her preſerver exacted a promiſe from the woman of the houſe, which was enforced by a gratuity, that ſhe would ſee her lodger wanted nothing in her abſence. This promiſe was eaſily made, and punctually kept; for money, that key to whatever can relieve diſtreſs, gratify ambition, or feed luxury, was on this laudable occaſion freely offered. When Helena and Caroline were left to themſelves, the latter in broken accents expreſſed her gratitude; and, after ſome time, Helena, not without heſitation, deſired her to explain ſome parts of her letter, if poſſible, more to her ſatisfaction. "Are you," continued ſhe, "certain, that lord Huntley is really the man you repreſent him? or have you not been tempted by a ſituation, miſerable indeed in the extreme, to make uſe of his name, as an excuſe for applying to me?" "Alas, madam," cried Caroline, "I have the moſt inconteſtible proofs of his baſeneſs: 'tis he, with a weakneſs I muſt ever bluſh for and lament, who has plunged me in this ſtate of infamous poverty, of guilt and miſery. He found me in an honeſt mediocrity, bleſſed with the protection of my family. My father is a tradeſman in the city, where accident once brought my ſeducer. Unfortunately for me, he ſaw and purſued me to ruin. That I yielded to his artful perſuaſions, has overwhelmed me with every ſpecies of miſery; has turned me forth a wanderer from the hoſpitable and parental roof; and reduced me to the condition you behold. For ſome months he kept me in affluence; but not all the indulgence his love prompted him to beſtow, was able to baniſh the corroding poiſon of a guilty conſcience. I had however

however no alternative; ſhame I had choſen, and ſhame muſt be my portion, with all its attendant conſequences; and I was obliged to purchaſe mirth and pleaſure, at the price of virtue. Your powerful charms, and ſhining virtues, firſt taught me to mourn the loſs of my lover's affection, and with it all that could for a moment reconcile me to infamy; for, had I not loved beyond the bounds of reaſon and religion, I had not been the wretch I am. In withdrawing himſelf from me, his lordſhip alſo neglected to ſecure me the means of ſubſiſtence, at leaſt only a temporary one. He wrote to me from Barnhurſt Caſtle, and incloſed me a bill for one hundred pounds. O madam, you can form no idea of the diſtraction that ſeized upon me: in the bitterneſs of my ſoul, in the anguiſh of my heart, I curſed the author of my ſhame, myſelf, and all the world. Unſupported by innocence, deſerted by every precept of religion, my principles had been too weak to ſuſtain with honor the artful attack of an inſinuating libertine: no wonder then, that when deprived of the peace which ſprings from conſcious purity, I ſhould, on being abandoned by him, to whom I had wantonly ſacrificed all that can adorn the female character, ſink under the united powers of guilt and poverty; or that I ſhould form a reſolution of ending a life, that was become a burden to me. A Power Almighty, in the moment of deſperation, was however graciouſly pleaſed to arreſt my impious hand, and, humbled before the awful idea of my God, I reſolved to wait till his providence ſhould ordain my death. In a ſtate of ſtupid grief I waſted the money I was poſſeſſed of; and then, unable to work, and aſhamed to beg, I was forced,

in deſpite of the yet unextinguiſhed ſpark of virtue, to proſtitute myſelf for bread. Spurned by my relations, ſhunned by all my former acquaintance, where could I fly? or to whom? Deſerted, ill, and poor, the ſtreet was my only habitation, till infamy had again procured me the means of hiding myſelf in this garret; and it was even denied me to breath my laſt here, unleſs I could pay. To you then, madam, having heard of your benevolent diſpoſition, I reſolved to apply. You have preſerved me. You have heard my ſtory; and muſt judge, whether I ought not to experience the lingering death your goodneſs has juſt reſcued me from. I have not injured you, madam; for the moſt dangerous and moſt engaging of his ſex, knew you not when I attracted his attention; and no ſooner had he beheld you, than I was deſerted. May you find him more conſtant to his vows; but you will accept none that honor and virtue do not authoriſe; and while you poſſeſs his affection, you will reclaim him from the paths of vice." "Never," exclaimed Helena; "never ſhall my ſoul continue its regard for an abandoned libertine. The ſeducer of Caroline ſhall never be united with me. I deteſt his baſeneſs." This exertion was too much for the ſpirits of Helena; haraſſed by an unexpected blow, ſubdued by a ſcene of miſery, and a tale of infamy, ſhe ſunk helpleſs on the floor. Caroline could lend her but a feeble aſſiſtance. The ſuſpenſion of her faculties was however ſhort; and ſhe revived, to experience a painful knowledge of the perfidy of him, on whom ſhe had reſted for happineſs; him, on whoſe accents ſhe had hung, as on the accents of virtue and honor. As ſhe recovered, ſhe exclaimed, "My God,

God, can it indeed be true, that lord Huntley is a villain? Can it be he, whoſe every action I have thought informed by the pure, the animating ſoul of virtue? Oh! righteous providence! where does ſhe reſide if not with him, who wears her fair reſemblance? Can I doubt? Would to heaven I could! but to my everlaſting miſery, a gleam of hope does not remain for me." Thus regardleſs of the preſence of a ſtranger, did Helena give vent to her griefs; her ſorrow was too poignant, her diſappointment too great to conceal; and prudence yielded to the emotions of the heart. She walked about the room, without knowing to whom, or where ſhe was expoſing the ſentiments ſhe had harboured for lord Huntley. At length ſhe wept plentifully; and feelings too powerful to be confined, were relieved, by this welcome ſhower; but it was ſome time 'ere ſhe ſufficiently recollected herſelf, or could attend to Caroline.

CHAP. XXII.

CAROLINE had obſerved the violent emotions betrayed by Helena, with a mute horror; and Helena, having given her all the aſſiſtance ſhe required for that time, roſe to return home, not a little afflicted, both at the confirmation of lord Huntley's baſeneſs, and the little command ſhe had over herſelf. Caroline again dropped on her knees before her, and cried out, "O God! what a wretch

a wretch I am! thus to deſtroy the peace of an angel!" Helena, too much ſoftened by her diſtreſs, haſtened to leave her, having promiſed to ſee her ſoon. She walked back to Clevedon Houſe, oppreſſed with a weight of uneaſineſs, known only to thoſe, who having fixed their ideas of earthly happineſs and perfection, on an unſtable foundation, too late diſcover themſelves deceived. She had adored his virtues long before ſhe was aware of his power over her heart; and now to have the fond, the flattering dream of felicity, ſhe had imagined real, vaniſh for ever; to have the untaſted cup of happineſs daſhed for ever from her, was more than reaſon, philoſophy, or the moſt patient gentleneſs, could reconcile in a moment to the powerful feelings of nature. When ſhe reached home, ſhe enquired for the dutcheſs, and was told her grace was aſleep. Not ſorry to have a ſhort time given her to ſubdue the firſt violence of her ſorrow, ſhe proceeded to her own apartment, there firſt to indulge, then if poſſible reduce it to the limits of reaſon. The dutcheſs being unable to ſit at dinner, Helena excuſed herſelf, pleading a head-ach; and had ſhe added a heart-ach, ſhe had not violated the truth. Glad to avoid the ſight of him who had thus cruelly cauſed her grief, ſhe eagerly availed herſelf of the abſence of the dutcheſs, to remain alone. In the evening, in anſwer to an enquiry ſhe ſent to her grace's room, ſhe received an invitation to ſit an hour or two with her; and, ever mindful of the eaſe and ſatisfaction of others, even in the midſt of her own diſtreſſes, ſhe readily obeyed the ſummons. The dutcheſs, though ill herſelf, ſoon diſcovered an alteration in the looks of her dear

Helena,

Helena, and anxiouſly enquired the cauſe. Helena told her of the ſcene of miſery ſhe had witneſſed in the morning; only leaving out her own and lord Huntley's ſhare in it. The dutcheſs having praiſed and approved the alacrity with which ſhe had performed the ſoothing act of heaven-born charity, tenderly recommended it to her, not to ſuffer her ſenſibility to prey too much on her ſpirits; which it would do, if not checked in time by the efforts of reaſon. This gentle admonition was ſcarcely uttered, ere the duke and lord Huntley entered the dreſſing-room. The former expreſſed his concern for the indiſpoſition that had deprived them of Helena's company at dinner; while the latter, directing all his attention towards the dutcheſs only, ſlightly aſked if Helena was better? This wonderful change, at once ſurpriſed and ſhocked her; love, ſtill in ſpite of all her efforts to baniſh him, lurked within her breaſt; and though ſhe muſt deſpiſe the object, yet ſhe had not prepared herſelf to meet his cold reſerve: for, however ſhe had found reaſon to alter her opinion of him, ſhe was totally at a loſs to gueſs what could have effected ſuch a ſudden tranſition in his behaviour. An honeſt pride and indignation filled her boſom; and ſhe made a noble effort to conquer ſentiments, ſhe now conſidered as a diſgrace, though the ſigh of recollection accompanied her beſt reſolves. The dutcheſs repeated the tranſaction of the morning, as Helena had informed her of it. During the recital, Helena fixed her eye (which was not devoid of penetration) on lord Huntley, with a view to read in his countenance, the guilt of his ſoul; but in vain: he expreſſed pity for the unfortunate Caroline; but no mark of

a baſe

a baſe mind appeared on his face. She was confounded; but at length concluded, that, if he was wicked enough to ruin and then deſert the frail and credulous Caroline, he had alſo bade adieu to all the feelings of humanity, and was above remorſe. As ſhe was contemplating the features which bore far different characters to thoſe ſhe had expected, their eyes met, and each inſtantly withdrew theirs, not without ſome ſigns of confuſion on the part of Helena.

CHAP. XXIII.

THE duke taking a bank bill from his pocket-book, deſired Helena would diſpoſe of it for the benefit of her unfortunate petitioner. The dutcheſs followed his example; and lord Huntley alſo preſented her with one; which with cold formality, he begged ſhe would do him the favour of conveying with the reſt. Then bowing to her, wiſhed the dutcheſs good night, and left the room. In about half an hour both the duke and Helena retired; after the latter had received many injunctions to take care of herſelf, and go to bed early, as the beſt remedy for a bad head-ach. When ſhe was once more alone, ſhe could not help reflecting with extreme pain on the revolution a few hours had made in her preſent, as well as future happineſs; and the ſum of all amounted to a conviction, that this world can afford no permanent

manent felicity; that the brighter our proſpects, the greater our diſappointments; and that, having in vain ſearched for happineſs, we ſhall quit a ſcene of tumult and anxiety, ſcorn, and unceaſing care, mixed only with a ſmall portion of enjoyments; but that virtue will triumph in a brighter region in a world to come. As it was impoſſible to ſleep, Helena reſolved to write to her friend Maria; to whom ſhe had communicated all that had occurred ſince her leaving D——.

LETTER.

IN my laſt letter to my dear Maria, I told her of my happineſs; and that it was only interrupted by trifling vexations, which opening proſpects would render pointleſs. I told my friend, that I was beloved by the moſt virtuous, the moſt charming of mankind; and that in lord Huntley's affection, my every wiſh was gratified:—how then ſhall I blot the preſent page, when I tell you, my Maria, that he who called forth my praiſe and admiration, and taught me what it was to love, that he is—— no, I will not ſay lord Huntley is a villain; but I may but juſtly declare, that he has made me wretched. A few hours ago, and I vainly fancied I was at the ſummit of human felicity; I was beloved, careſſed, and flattered, by the moſt artful, the moſt dangerous of his deceitful ſex. He had left me only a few moments, when a letter was delivered to me, a copy of which I incloſe to you, and when you have read it, you will own that I have reaſon to deplore my knowledge of a man, who is capable of ſuch baſeneſs and cruelty.

At firſt I diſbelieved its contents, and loaded the miſerable writer with epithets of abhorrence and anger, for daring to traduce lord Huntley, whoſe character I fondly thought ſhould have preſerved him from a charge ſo full of malice and falſehood. I would have ſhewn him the letter, regardleſs of the writer's injunctions to keep it ſecret; for I thought him ſo entirely incapable of the guilt aſcribed to him, that I imagined it would only be doing him juſtice to give him an opportunity of clearing up the affair, and puniſhing the daring calumny. This Maria was the firſt impulſe of my heart, directed, no doubt, by its too partial regard for the unworthy Huntley. Moſt fortunately I was prevented from carrying my deſign into execution, for his lordſhip was gone out, whilſt I was venting my unjuſt indignation on the unhappy Caroline. At length I reſolved to take the only ſtep left me, at once to clear his fame, and ſerve the poor wretch who had applied to me for ſupport. I inſtantly ſet out in ſearch of her; and I found her more miſerable than words can paint. She too ſoon convinced me, that I had nothing to hope relative to lord Huntley's innocence; for ſhe repeated a circumſtantial account of her meeting with him, her ruin and deſertion, of his knowledge of me, and his love for me, as his reaſon for conſigning her to endleſs ſhame and miſery. In ſhort, Maria, ſhe told me a tale, which has fixed a deep and laſting wound in my boſom, which time alone can alleviate, but reaſon cannot cure. 'Tis my fixed reſolve to liſten no more to the voice of love; for though lord Huntley is poſſeſſed of charms that warm the cold boſom of age, convinced as I am of his want of thoſe qualities he falſely

falſely aſſumes, ſhould I not be a partaker of his crimes, if I joined myſelf with their too ſpecious ally. Such a connection could only produce the miſery it would merit.

On my return to Clevedon Houſe, I retired to my own room, in order to avoid an interview with a man I yet retain too tender a ſentiment for, but whom I will deſpiſe. The dutcheſs was ill, and did not quit her apartment; ſo that I excuſed myſelf from appearing at dinner. You will believe, Maria, that the agitation of my mind was, and ſtill continues violent. To the weakneſs of my nature I was conſtrained to yield. I wept, and bitterly lamented my own folly, his worthleſs conduct, and the deluſive ideas of happineſs I had fatally entertained. About ſeven, the dutcheſs ſent for me; and obſerving I looked ill, enquired the cauſe. I related my viſit to the wretched Caroline as a reaſon; and I alſo mentioned it, in order to procure her additional aſſiſtance. I concealed, you may be certain, all lord Huntley's part in the relation. We had not diſmiſſed the ſubject, ere the duke and his ſon entered; their approach had thrown my ſpirits into a ſtrange perturbation, when to my ſhame I muſt acknowledge, that a double portion of grief and diſappointment ſeized me, on receiving the coldeſt ſalutation from lord Huntley. The duke, with his wonted kindneſs, expreſſed his concern for my indiſpoſition; but he who ſo lately had watched every turn of my countenance, and, with a gentleneſs peculiar to himſelf, had even power to ſooth and delight me, his averted eye now glanced diſdain; and to me he never ſpoke a ſingle ſentence, till the dutcheſs having mentioned the diſtreſſed ſituation in which

I had

I had diſcovered Caroline, together with the duke, gave me two bank bills for her relief, he, with an effrontery the moſt aſtoniſhing, roſe, and, with all the formality of a ſtranger, preſented me with another for the ſame purpoſe. I marked his countenance while the ſtory was telling; but, to my utter ſurprize and confuſion, it betrayed only a benevolent ſenſibility, ſuch as I have ſeen him diſplay a thouſand times on ſimilar occaſions.

And now, Maria, it only remains for your too credulous, and, you muſt allow me to ſay, afflicted friend, to withdraw, if poſſible, her affections from this too charming object of them; for what have I to do with his wondrous powers of pleaſing, except to ſhun them as the lure of my peace, and the deſtruction of every better ſentiment? I ought to rejoice that I was undeceived in time to avoid the impending danger; for would it not be raſh and dangerous to marry a libertine? Have I not made this my principal objection to lord Farnham; who, though leſs ſpecious, is certainly actuated by the ſame motives, to purſue ſuch an indirect line of conduct; a determination to gratify himſelf at the expence of virtue, if ſhe ſhould oppoſe him. The change in lord Huntley's manner, I own fills me with ſurprize; and I can only account for it from the ficklenefs of his real character. Some younger, fairer victim, I ſuppoſe, engages his attention now. I can pity her weakneſs, and lament her fate, whoever ſhe is, if ſhe is deceived, which it is more than probable ſhe will be, for who could ſuſpect him? O that I had never left my peaceful village, to tread the dangerous and uncertain haunts of public life! that I had died unknowing and unknown by all, except my dear

Maria

Maria and her amiable family! Then had I never felt the pangs imparted by the knowledge of the deceitful Huntley's baſeneſs; or taſted, to the deſtruction of my peace, the bliſs of being beloved by him. Adieu my beſt, my early friend; in your gentle boſom, Helena ſhall never find a ſting to wound her, and compleat the ſhock already felt. Write to me, Maria; and if poſſible adminiſter ſome healing balm, ſuch as friendſhip can beſtow. I know you will: Ah why is that inadequate to the cure? Be aſſured of my unalterable affection; and accept the prayers and good wiſhes of your

HELENA SIDNEY.

CHAP. XXIV.

WHEN Helena had finiſhed her letter, ſhe rang for her maid, and went to bed; hoping to find that peace in ſleep, which waking ſhe was denied: her weary eye-lids cloſed in vain; and the balmy ſlumbers which were wont to viſit her, now fled from all her efforts to obtain their ſoothing influence. The calmneſs of infantine repoſe, had till now ever attended her nights, as the ſportive gaiety of eaſe and innocence had bleſſed her days; but the ſcene had changed on a ſudden; the preſent proſpect was gloomy, and afforded no pleaſure on reflection. The morning only ſerved to confirm her uneaſineſs, and bring in her view the author

thor of it. She deſcended into the breakfaſt room with a heavy heart, and found lord Huntley alone there; his eyes were fixed on the fire, and he appeared buried in profound meditation. On ſeeing Helena, he ſtarted, hoped ſhe was well, and flew out of the room, without ſtaying for her anſwer. In ſpite of all her reſolution, this neglect pierced her to the ſoul; and though ſhe would herſelf have flown from his kindneſs, yet ſo weak is human reaſon, ſo inconſiſtent all human deſires and reſolves, that the only thing that, circumſtanced as ſhe was, could be wiſhed, now gave her the moſt agonizing pain; and unable to repreſs the riſing exertion, ſhe burſt into tears. The approach of the duke obliged her to make an effort to regain her compoſure: he entered, and breakfaſt was ordered; the dutcheſs ſtill kept her room, and the ſervant ſaid lord Huntley was gone out; ſo that the duke and Helena ſat down alone. The former talked on indifferent ſubjects, and took his tea very comfortably; while Helena found it difficult to maintain a tolerable appearance of the indifference ſhe wiſhed to feel. At dinner, lord Huntley was alſo abſent. This was the firſt time he had performed any engagement without reluctance, and without expreſſing that reluctance to Helena; but ſhe, though totally at a loſs to divine the cauſe of his behaviour, yet was glad to avoid him on any terms, as his coldneſs was inſupportable; and ſhe thought it only belonged to her to ſhew reſentment. In the evening, the dutcheſs, finding herſelf better, expreſſed a wiſh to have a party at whiſt. Lord Huntley was returned, and ſhe ſent to beg his company; and as he never refuſed to comply with any requeſt of hers, he immediately

ately obeyed the ſummons. According to their uſual cuſtom, the duke and dutcheſs played againſt lord Huntley and Helena. Each took their place, to the no ſmall diſturbance of the two younger. Lord Huntley paid a profound attention to his cards; an example Helena endeavoured to follow; but was conſcious, ſhe ſucceeded very ill; for ſhe was guilty of more miſtakes than ever. But as ſhe profeſſed no knowledge of the game, and they played merely for amuſement, no notice was taken of it. On former occaſions, lord Huntley had been more inclined to talk over his cards; if only to be gratified with the ſound of Helena's voice, which was

"More muſically clear,
"Than ever breathed on mortal ear."

In the midſt of this ſolemn rubber, a letter arrived from Mr. Nowel at Cambridge, which contained an account of the ill ſtate of lord Charles's health; and recommending change of ſcene and air, as the moſt likely means of reſtoring it. In an inſtant, they were all ſeized with the moſt alarming apprehenſions on his account; and, after a ſhort deliberation, it was agreed, that lord Huntley ſhould ſet off early next morning for Cambridge, and bring his brother and Mr. Nowel immediately to town. The cards were thrown by, and his lordſhip retired, on pretence of giving ſome orders for his departure. The dutcheſs was terrified, and Helena mourned the indiſpoſition of a youth for whom ſhe felt a ſiſterly regard, and who to her had ever been kind and affectionate. The duke tried to diſguiſe his own feelings, in order to relieve the dutcheſs, whoſe maternal

maternal tenderneſs, and weak nerves, contributed to magnify the diſorder of her ſon, into a dangerous illneſs, though Mr. Nowel had aſſured her to the contrary.

CHAP. XXV.

IN a few days lord Charles, attended by his brother and Mr. Nowel, arrived in town, to the great relief of the duke and ducheſs, and Helena, who had with them felt many apprehenſions on his account, and had ſpent the interval, between the knowledge of his illneſs and his return from Cambridge, in the utmoſt ſtate of anxiety, to which various cauſes contributed. He was much altered in his looks, his vivacity had not forſaken him, though his thin pale countenance proclaimed his diſorder to be real. He affected to rally their fears, and ſaid, a little of their agreeable converſe would ſoon reſtore him to perfect health. On the duke's obſerving that he looked ill, and had totally loſt the glowing appearance of health he brought from Barnhurſt Caſtle; he replied, that ſtudy was an enemy to the complexion: "it would," continued he, "be a ſtriking inconſiſtency for a philoſopher to look blooming; the air of the academic grove, is not congenial to the ſpirit of Hygeia." He tenderly reproved the uneaſineſs of his mother, and aſſured her he ſhould ſoon be well; he diſcovered an alteration in Helena, and ſoon attacked her on the cauſe; ſhe endeavoured to evade his penetration, by affecting a gaiety which was foreign to her heart; but the aukward deceit ſoon betrayed

betrayed itſelf. The duke and dutcheſs, and Mr. Nowel left the room together; and lord Huntley, who carefully avoided all poſſibility of being in the company of Helena, ſoon followed their example; lord Charles alone remained—he fixed his eyes on Helena, as if with an intent to ſearch the inmoſt receſſes of her ſoul; this pointed enquiry kept them both ſilent for ſome minutes; the one from the eagerneſs of obſervation, the other from a confuſed emotion; at length, unable to endure ſuch a ſcrutinizing ſurvey of her feature, Helena begged to know why his lordſhip beſtowed ſo much attention, to examine a face which muſt be ſo familiar to him? "I wiſhed," replied he, "to read the ſentiments of your heart; but my ſkill is baffled; either your countenance is no index, or I am no judge in phyſiognomy: I diſcover in your face, candour, truth, conſtancy, and gentleneſs; but I am told that your are cruel, inconſtant and deceitful." "I don't know, my Lord," reply'd Helena, (whoſe riſing colour declared ſhe did not wholly conſider the charge as a jeſt) how I have deſerved the epithet you beſtow ſo liberally upon me; but your informer, I may conclude, is a prejudiced perſon." "I acknowledge it," ſaid lord Charles, "he is prejudiced to a degree that deſtroys him; but you rather evade, than anſwer my charge." "Thoſe," reply'd Helena, "who have any intereſt in ſuppoſing me poſſeſſed of the unamiable qualities they are ſo ready to aſcribe to me, may, if they pleaſe, enjoy the injurious idea; it is neither conſiſtent with my pride or inclination to controvert it." "It is well," anſwered he calmly; "in this inſtance you are truly conſiſtent, though I confeſs I had formed a very different notion of your character; but," continued

tinued he, "in juſtice to an attachment you once allowed to give you pleaſure, in juſtice to the diſtreſs of a man who ſtill adores you, permit me to aſk, and let me hope you will candidly anſwer me one plain queſtion." "Convinced, my lord," ſaid Helena, "that you will make no requeſt I ought to deny, you may proceed with a confidence of being reſolved in all your doubts, as far as I am able." "Did you not then," continued lord Charles, "did you not once love my brother?" "It was my misfortune," replied Helena. "Why?" ſaid his lordſhip; "he returned your affection with the moſt ardent paſſion that ever dwelt in the heart of man." Helena ſighed and ſaid, "I did indeed think ſo, but —" "But what?" exclaimed he. "It is all at an end," continued Helena; "he has ſeen his error, and I gladly releaſe him from his engagement." "He knows it," exclaimed lord Charles, while an indignant bluſh animated all his features: "Ah, fickle and unjuſt Helena! you have deſtroyed the peace of one, whoſe virtues and affection promiſed you every happineſs; one who, having fixed his fond imagination on a faithleſs woman, is left to deplore his credulity, and lament his own folly, in believing that ſo fair a form was to contain a mind as fair; if you can enjoy the pain you have cauſed, rejoice now, for lord Huntley is devoured by his fatal and unfortunate attachment to you." "My lord," replied Helena, aſtoniſhed at the ſeverity of his cenſure, "to what cauſe am I to attribute ſuch unmerited reproach? could lord Huntley find out no other method of diſcovering the change in his ſentiments? or, is it an honorable office in you, to inſult a woman, who, if ſhe choſe to make a defence, would find it weak and unattended to? you will one day be con-

vinced, that I never deſerved the harſh language of reproach from you or your brother; and you muſt allow me, my lord, to ſay, that, having the honor of being related to you, I may alſo inherit a portion of that conſcious pride, which teaches me to ſupport myſelf under an injury. I would not retort, except with ſilent contempt. I have relinquiſhed the flattering idea of a nearer alliance with a houſe, of which I am a diſtant branch. Ambition is not my darling foible; I aim at no ſplendid connection: but, while I feel no reluctance to continue in the humbler ſtation of private life, I am not wholly inſenſible to the unkind treatment of thoſe I vainly thought my friends." As Helena uttered this laſt ſentence, her voice ſoftened, and a tear ſtole from her eye. Lord Charles, affected by her manner, aſſumed a milder aſpect; and ſaid, "If I have unwarily offended you, in the warmth of my regard for an injured brother, I intreat your pardon: I meant not to inſult; I wiſh not to create your reſentment; and, if you will condeſcend to tell me, whether you really are to be married to lord Farnham, it is all I deſire, and what I have ſome right to expect from you." "Married to lord Farnham!" exclaimed Helena; "from whence could ſuch an idea ariſe? No, my lord," continued ſhe, "lord Farnham never put it in my power to reject or accept him. 'Tis true, his attention might have raiſed my vanity, if his conduct and character had not created my entire diſapprobation: and be aſſured, that he is the laſt man, from whom I would receive a coronet; even though I could ſuppoſe it encircled every human felicity." "I cannot doubt your truth or ſincerity," returned lord Charles, "they are both written in your

in your eyes; and I moſt ſincerely beg your pardon, for the unjuſt liberty I have taken to cenſure your conduct; but it is ſtrongly reported, both by that nobleman's friends, as well as others, that you were actually engaged; and Sir William Harland, a young man of Cambridge, mentioned meeting you at ſir James Sundan's; where lord Farnham's behaviour to you confirmed the report." Helena then repeated every circumſtance of her viſit; and the mortification ſhe had endured there. Lord Charles thanked her for her patient attention to him; and deſired leave to acquaint his brother with the reſult of their conference. "No," replied Helena, ſighing; "I muſt content myſelf with having removed from your mind an unjuſt prejudice; but lord Huntley's opinion ought to be indifferent to me; ſince a cauſe, as fatal to my peace, as deſtructive to his reputation, will ever ſubſiſt as a bar to our union. Aſk me not for an explanation; I have ſolemnly promiſed not to reveal a ſecret, that preys on my happineſs; but I will not violate my word on any conſideration. I thought, alas! that I had beſtowed my regard on the moſt amiable of mankind; but I was cruelly deceived; and I muſt not ſuffer myſelf to be again lulled into a falſe ſecurity, by his too charming but deſtructive eloquence. Would I had expired, before the knowledge of his unworthineſs reached me; for I muſt own, that lord Huntley's affection was the delight of my life; I cheriſhed a flame, that has ſerved to conſume my peace of mind; but I muſt now endeavour to extinguiſh it." "What am I to think," cried lord Charles, "of this dreadful ſecret? Ah, Helena, why was you tempted to promiſe concealment? Some villain, envious

of

of your mutual happineſs, has contrived to blaſt it.

CHAP. XXVI.

THIS long converſation had fatigued and agitated the ſpirits of Helena ſo much, that ſhe found it neceſſary to retire, in order to recover herſelf; therefore haſtened to her own room, to relieve her feelings by a free indulgence of them. With a mind ſaddened by a recollection of the delight ſhe once felt in lord Huntley's affection, ſhe threw herſelf in a chair, without power to exert thoſe faculties, which added keenneſs to her ſorrow, while they ſeemed almoſt ſuſpended themſelves. In this ſtate of inactive miſerable reflection, ſhe remained ſome time, till the animation of her ideas brought back to her remembrance the ſtill more wretched Caroline, to whom ſhe had promiſed a ſecond viſit, but which ſhe had not yet performed; the bills too were ſtill in her poſſeſſion, and that ſhe might not a moment longer withhold what might mitigate the ſufferings of that unhappy young woman, ſhe reſolved to incloſe them in a letter, and ſend her own maid; as ſhe herſelf was wholly unable to undertake ſo diſtreſſing a commiſſion in perſon. As ſoon then, as ſhe could reduce her thoughts to any degree of regularity; ſhe prepared to addreſs a few lines of apology, or reaſon, for breaking her word.

To

To Caroline Danby.

I AM concerned it is not in my power to fulfil my promiſe of ſeeing you again, at leaſt not at preſent, as I now find myſelf totally incapable of ſupporting an interview; for which reaſon I encloſe what I hope will enable you to purſue a more virtuous and happier line of life; to the eſtabiſhment of which, I ſhall always be happy to contribute. The emotions I betrayed on hearing the ſtory of your misfortunes, muſt have informed you, of what I would have concealed from all the world; but be aſſured, the man, who could baſely betray, and then cruelly deſert you, ſhall never again deceive me with his ſpecious virtues. You are indebted to the duke and dutcheſs of Clevedon for two of the bills. I informed them of your unfortunate ſituation, as far as was neceſſary to procure for you an aſſiſtance I was not wholly qualified to offer of myſelf. I ſhall be much pleaſed to hear, at ſome future period, that the efforts I have made to ſerve you, have not proved ineffectual; and I now take my leave of you, wiſhing you a return of that peace of mind, virtue alone can beſtow; purſue her then, and be happy, and accept the beſt wiſhes of your ſympathiſing friend,

Helena Sidney.

When Helena had diſpatched her maid with the letter, and given her ſtrict orders not to deliver it to any body but Caroline herſelf; ſhe was again left to the torment of her own reflection, which in her ſituation could afford no comfort. She was however ſoon obliged to make ſome preparation for

for her appearance at dinner; with a heaving heart ſhe performed the taſk of dreſſing, as an interview with lord Huntley was there unavoidable. Before ſhe was under a neceſſity of leaving her room, her maid returned with an anſwer to the letter, which Helena received with a languor, its contents ſerved to diſpel in an inſtant.

To Miſs SIDNEY.

ON my knees, moſt injured and angelic of women, I implore your pity and forgiveneſs, and deprecate your juſt anger; remorſe has ſeized my ſoul, and, as the only return I can make for your benevolent kindneſs to me, I will confeſs that I have impoſed on your charity, and baſely traduced a nobleman, whoſe character is all I am acquainted with; never having ſeen lord Huntley, whoſe name I had the preſumption to make uſe of, to work upon your feelings; my ſtory is, alas! too fatally true, all but the accuſation againſt his Lordſhip, which I entreat and conjure you to forgive, as the falſehood was dictated by the extreme diſtreſs in which I was involved, and under which, but for you, I muſt have ſunk. This ſecond too liberal mark of your generous pity for the unfortunate, ſhall not be thrown away; I will employ it to procure that peace, you ſo ſweetly condeſcend to wiſh for me; and while I humble myſelf in penitence to Heaven, I will ever remember the hand that ſerved me, and mix with my prayers a fervent addreſs for your happineſs and proſperity. Will you, dear madam, have the goodneſs to return my moſt grateful and humble acknowledgments to the duke and dutcheſs of Clevedon, for a generoſity I have ſo ill deſerved from them; and

that

that I had the wickedneſs and inhumanity to wound a heart like yours for a moment, fills me with ſhame and horror at my own depravity. But you, madam, are innocent, and you will be happy; the ſmiles of fortune play around you; may ſhe ever ſmile, and the guardians of human worth ever wait to conduct you through the world, without one pang to ſully the whiteneſs of the laughing hours; may the tear of ſympathy alone gliſten in your eye, and like the pearly drops of morning dew on the opening roſe, adorn your cheek; and may time on ſilken wings conduct you to that heaven you merit, when full of years and honors you have reached the goal of life. Accept the ſincere repentance of one whoſe will never injured, but whoſe misfortunes overcome her integrity; let your powerful prayers attend me to my retirement, in the convent of ——— at Paris, to which place I am induced to go, having a relation there, from whom I hope a kinder reception, than from any other part of my offended family. Oh madam, you are my friend, my preſerver, and may the bleſſing of a merciful creator deſcend upon you, with the moſt perfect admiration of your virtues, and the utmoſt reſpect for your character, I humbly intreat your pardon for this treſpaſs, and take my leave, for ever, I fear, of all that is lovely and angelic both in mind and perſon. I am madam, your truly obliged and faithful ſervant,

CAROLINE DANBY.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVII.

HELENA read, and her mourning was turned into joy; joy too great to be endured, had not a welcome ſhower of tears relieved her full boſom of the weight it contained. She re-read the dear, the precious confirmation of her Huntley's innocence, and accorded his full and free pardon to the writer of the wonder-working epiſtle. Then on the wings of gayeſt hope, ſhe flew to entreat his forgiveneſs, for having ever doubted his honor and his truth. She proceeded towards the library, where ſhe was informed his Lordſhip was, with the two letters in her hand, to explain and apologize for her; with trembling and impatient pleaſure ſhe opened the door, and beheld him ſitting in a thoughtful poſture, from which her appearance rouſed him. The bluſh of conſcious error, mixed with the ſmile of happineſs, adorned the face of Helena; her eye proclaimed her half afraid to advance, yet unwilling to retreat, and the drops of delighted ſenſibility ſtood ready to quit their ſtation. Lord Huntley looked ſurprized; ſhe ſtepped forward and gently exclaimed, "Can you forgive me, my lord? can you pardon my credulity? here is my excuſe." He ſeized the hand that offered him the letters, and preſſed it to his lips. "This moment," cry'd he, "is worth my whole life. Ah, my dear Helena, let me rather aſk, if you can forgive my unpardonable behaviour? but I ſee you do, and my hours to come ſhall be de-

voted to reward your goodneſs. What do theſe papers contain, that Helena condeſcends to offer them as an excuſe?" She then reminded him of the ſtory the dutcheſs had repeated of the unfortunate Caroline, and begged he would peruſe the contents of the two letters, which at her deſire he did. When he had finiſhed the firſt, he exclaimed, "Indeed, my beloved Helena has from this accuſation every reaſon to believe me a villain; but to what lucky chance am I ſo fortunate to owe a contradiction of ſo falſe a charge?" This queſtion was anſwered by Caroline's laſt letter, which when he had finiſhed, he folded the charming Helena to his faithful boſom, and declared that ſhe was the pride, the delight of his life, and he would inſtantly make known his claim to call her wholly and for ever his. Lord Charles entered at the moment, and teſtified the utmoſt aſtoniſhment and joy, at ſeeing them thus happily reconciled. Helena put the letters into his hand, which he read with attention, and returned with many praiſes due to her virtue and benevolence, but pronounced the writer an impudent impoſtor, or a weak engine in the hands of a villain, whoſe intereſt or inclination tempted him to ſeparate Helena and his brother; "But," continued he, "ſince the ſcheme has proved abortive, we will leave the contrivers of it in the retirement they may chuſe, and enjoy our own happineſs." Dinner now demanded their attendance, and Helena had again ſo far prevailed on lord Huntley, that he had promiſed her not to mention the ſubject of their engagement that day. They all ſat down to table, poſſeſſed of unuſual harmony of ſpirits; and lord Charles, who was not as bad as had been apprehended, was ſo much elevated,

vated, as to contribute greatly to the mirth and pleaſantry of the party. Tranquillity now took up her accuſtomed reſidence at Clevedon Houſe, where ſo lately ſhe had been baniſhed for a ſhort term, but where in general ſhe was a conſtant inhabitant. The brilliant features of Helena now ſhone with added luſtre, and the manly graces of lord Huntley, were animated by happineſs.

CHAP. XXVIII.

AS lord Charles Sidney's health did not permit him to engage in the diſſipation of London, lord Huntley and Helena entered into an agreement, to decline all public as well as private amuſements, till he was able to accompany them. Helena had from day to day put off the intended explanation with the duke, as ſhe was fearful of deſtroying the calm, ſo newly confirmed: when one morning, lord Huntley had been prevailed on to read a new play to the dutcheſs, Helena, and lord Charles; for which purpoſe they had all aſſembled in her grace's dreſſing-room. As he was poſſeſſed of the moſt various powers as well as harmony of voice, and his judgment was little inferior to that of a Garrick, they received the higheſt entertainment from his exertions to do all poſſible juſtice to the performance he undertook to read; and they were in the midſt of a diſcourſe

on the merits of the play, when the duke entered with an open letter in his hand, which he gave to the dutcheſs, who, when ſhe had read it, ſaid, "I think Helena is the perſon to be conſulted on this occaſion." "Moſt undoubtedly," reply'd his grace, and immediately put the letter into Helena's hand. She took it, perfectly ignorant of its contents, and wondering what relation it could have to her; when to her extreme vexation ſhe read as follows:

To his Grace the Duke of CLEVEDON.

My Lord Duke,

I TAKE the liberty of addreſſing your grace, on a ſubject which will, I truſt, be an apology for the trouble I am under the neceſſity of giving you.

I have every reaſon to believe, that your grace's intereſt with Miſs Sidney is extenſive; and through that medium I venture to propoſe myſelf a candidate for her hand. If my pretenſions are ſo fortunate to meet with your grace's concurrence, I ſhall eſteem myſelf a happy man, and take the firſt moment allowed me to aſſure you in perſon, how much I am, my lord, your grace's obliged and faithful friend,

FARNHAM.

Helena returned the letter without ſpeaking, anxiouſly wiſhing the duke to break the ſilence, that ſhe might declare her ſentiments. It was not long before he gave her the deſired opportunity; for, after a very ſhort pauſe, he ſaid, "Well, Helena, I conclude you can have no objection to my receiving

ceiving lord Farnham's viſits on his own terms." "I am obliged to his lordſhip," replied ſhe, "for the honor he intends me, but I hope I ſhall not be condemned by your grace, if I decline accepting it." "My dear," ſaid the duke ſmiling, "I know young ladies never accept the firſt overture of this nature; but you will not be angry, if I take it for granted, that you have commiſſioned me to admit his lordſhip. "Indeed," returned Helena, "your grace is miſtaken, if you think I affect to diſlike an offer I mean to accept; you muſt allow me to declare, that lord Farnham is, of all men living, the laſt I would chuſe to connect myſelf with; and I depend on the kind indulgence I have ſo often experienced from you, to return ſuch an anſwer, as will neither offend nor encourage his lordſhip." "Am I really," replied the duke, "to underſtand this as an abſolute rejection?" "Such are my ſentiments," ſaid Helena, "and ſuch I moſt ſincerely believe they will ever be." Lord Huntley roſe from his ſeat, and approaching Helena, took her hand and ſaid, "It is now time that I ſhould declare to the world the ſentiments of admiration, of affection and unalterable eſteem, I feel for the charming Helena; and," continued he, turning to the duke, "that I ſhould claim my father's approbation of my choice; my felicity will then be compleat." "My God, exclaimed the duke, whoſe faculties ſeemed ſuſpended while his ſon ſpoke; why did I not foreſee and prevent the horrors of this hour? Oh my children! I have deſtroyed you both." Helena confounded at the beginning of the ſpeech, was now bewildered in a maze of perplexity; for there was more of grief than of anger, in the manner which accompanied the myſterious words: the death-like paleneſs

neſs of the dutcheſs, declared ſhe was no ſtranger to his meaning. Lord Huntley, whoſe impatience could contain no longer, cried out, "Explain I conjure you this dreadful language." "I ought," replied the duke, to have told you, my ſon, that Helena is my daughter, your ſiſter." Helena ſunk motionleſs into the arms of lord Charles, who caught her as ſhe was falling to the floor. Lord Huntley exclaimed, "You have indeed deſtroyed me; Oh my God! what a blow is this!" Then bending over the ſenſeleſs form of his unhappy ſiſter, his manly ſpirit fled, and he indulged the weakneſs of a woman The duke walked about the room in the utmoſt diſorder; the dutcheſs, trembling, endeavoured to aſſiſt her ſon to raiſe Helena; and Mr. Nowel, whom accident had directed to the apartment, ſeemed the only perſon capable of acting: he tried to calm the violent emotions of the duke, who ſaid, "Leave me, my good friend, leave me to ſuſtain alone the ſorrow I have occaſioned, and take care of thoſe unfortunate children; but bid them not curſe their miſerable father." He then left the room; Mr. Nowel called for the female attendants, and had Helena conveyed to her own room, where lord Charles and his brother would themſelves carry her; the dutcheſs, following, ſhed tears over their diſtreſs. Lord Huntley, when he had laid the ſtill lifeleſs Helena on her bed, cried out, "Oh! for mercy look once more on your wretched Huntley; raiſe your drooping head, my ſweet ſiſter! or have I blaſted thy beauties for ever!" Helena, by help of the various remedies tried to recover her, once more opened her eyes, and beheld the anxious tenderneſs of lord Huntley. "Ah! my lord," exclaimed ſhe in a feeble accent, "what a diſcovery!

a diſcovery! it has at once preſerved and deſtroyed me." He kneeled by the bed, and held her hand in his while ſhe ſpoke. "Live," anſwered he, "oh live, and beſtow a ſiſterly affection on me—do not, Helena, deprive me of every ray of comfort."

A phyſician now arrived, and made it his requeſt, that they would all leave the room, as any hurry of ſpirits might prove more fatal than any other circumſtance to his patient's life. Lord Huntley ſlowly withdrew, ſtill gazing on the pale countenance of Helena. When Doctor R. came from the apartment, that reſtleſs and unhappy young man, met and eagerly enquired of him his opinion of Helena. "She is," replied the Doctor, "at preſent very ill; her conſtitution, at all times delicate, has received a ſhock it will require every care to recover: ſhe will I hope do well, but it is impoſſible for me to pronounce poſitively." His lordſhip retired to his own room, while lord Charles and the dutcheſs aſſiſted Mr. Nowel to rouſe the duke from the ſtupid grief he had fallen into. Clevedon Houſe, ſo lately the manſion of peace, was now the houſe of mourning. The domeſtics ſeemed to partake the ſorrow of their ſuperiors, and ſilently glided from room to room with melancholy faces. In the evening, when Dr. R. came again, he found his patient worſe, her fever had encreaſed, and her ſenſes were not clear. In as gentle terms as poſſible he declared his apprehenſions. Lord Charles ſhed a tear over the untimely fate of an amiable friend; and foreſaw in the death of Helena, either a confirmation of his beloved brother's miſery, or a ſpeedy end to it in the grave.

It was alſo neceſſary for him to undertake the melancholy office of breaking the cataſtrophe hourly apprehended, to the reſt of the family; he found his brother in a condition, little able to bear the additional weight of woe he had to communicate; his eyes were fixed, his perſon immoveable, and it was ſome time ere he could engage his attention in the ſmalleſt degree. At length, however, he made him too well underſtand the fatal purport of his meſſage; and with a ſigh that ſeemed to rend his heart, he ſaid, "'Tis well, ſhe will be an angel, and now the blow is compleat: I feel it here," putting his hand on his heart; "and here it is," ſaid he, holding his head, "it has pierced deeply." The vivacity of lord Charles was quite ſubdued; he could find no conſolation to offer, for his own boſom ſwelled with grief; and each ſat inwardly, mourning the fate of the lovely dying Helena. No one went to bed, and every noiſe in the houſe appalled each individual out of the apartment of the ſick; for they concluded every moment was her laſt. Every foot that ſounded along the gallery, by lord Huntley's room, he conſtrued into the meſſenger of deadly tidings. In this ſtate of horrid ſuſpenſe he remained till morning dawned.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIX.

HELENA ſtill breathed, but continued all the enſuing day with no other ſign of life than an almoſt imperceptible reſpiration: ſhe was happily unconſcious of her own ſituation; the grief of her friends, and the alteration a few hours had made in the preſent as well as future proſpects of not only herſelf but all with whom ſhe was connected. The dutcheſs, haraſſed by her unremitting attention to the duke, Helena and lord Huntley, was, at the cloſe of the ſecond day, obliged to commit the care of her young friend, to her woman and Helena's maid. With ſome difficulty, lord Huntley, at the earneſt intreaties of his diſconſolate father, was at length prevailed upon to take that repoſe his wearied mind, as well as body, ſtood ſo much in need of; the duke himſelf, worn out by this anxious ſuſpence, and ſorrowful reflections on his indiſcretion, ſubmitted to the all powerful reſtorative of nature; and lord Charles, whoſe animal ſpirits were too great for his ſtrength, yielded to the ſolicitations of his mother, and retired to bed; Mr. Nowel, who, though he ſincerely felt the general diſtreſs, nouriſhed the warmeſt regard and eſteem for every individual of a family to whom he was bound by the cloſe ties of gratitude and friendſhip, and paid the juſt tribute of admiration and approbation to the merits of Helena, yet ſuſtained the ſtroke which threaten-

ed the life of a beauteous, but unfortunate young woman, deprived the duke of peace, from the corroding recollection of having cauſed the whole of the miſchief, and would undoubtedly endanger the exiſtence, and at all events deſtroy the happineſs of a ſon, whoſe virtues and underſtanding promiſed to ſupport the honor of his name and houſe without blemiſh; he ſtill retained the firmneſs of experience, the wiſdom of age, and the ſtability of friendſhip; he had neither contributed to the misfortunes nor beheld them unmoved; but it was wholly out of his power to remedy them in any degree, or by any other method than by preſerving his ability to act, which the ſenſibility of youth had deprived one part of the familiy from doing; and the too poignant emotions of the others were equally deſtructive to the coolneſs of reaſon: he therefore alone, amidſt the general confuſion, ſtill ſupported a compoſed gravity; he exerted the calm wiſdom of a philoſopher, with the eloquence of a reaſoning chriſtian, to reconcile the mind of the duke, and ſooth his agonies; he ſuffered the firſt tranſports of ſorrow to ſubſide, before he attempted to offer a word of conſolation to lord Huntley, and to the now ſenſeleſs Helena, he paid the unceaſing attention of benevolent friendſhip; he lay down for a few hours to enable him to go through the taſk his character and ſituation enjoined him to perform, but he left ſtrict orders to be called if the ſlighteſt change appeared. Helena ſtill lay, the inanimate reſemblance of all that ſo lately was beauty and virtue; her afflicted ſervant, who had drawn the ſprings of life from the ſame ſource, wept without reſtraint, and even thoſe

domeſticks

domeſticks who had been leſs accuſtomed to be near her perſon, and whoſe aſſiſtance was now called in, ſhewed ſigns of ſenſibility; this night, like the former, vaniſhed in the ſame terrible ſuſpenſe, and the eager but melancholy enquiries made in the morning were anſwered as before, that ſhe ſtill lived, but that was all; about noon ſhe gave ſigns of returning reaſon, and in the courſe of an hour was perfectly herſelf; quietneſs was enforced by the phyſician; not a voice was heard, not a foot-ſtep throughout the houſe, all was as ſtill as death, and Helena was too weak to utter more than a ſyllable at a time; in the room next her apartment continued ſome one of the family, to communicate the ſtate of her health every quarter of an hour to the reſt, and in the evening the doctor returned to pronounce her recovery leſs doubtful; ſhe gained ſomething of her natural ſtrength each day and hour; and lord Huntley was prevailed on to try a tour to the continent, as an interview with Helena was, for ſome time, abſolutely forbid, as a thing deſtructive to her life: when he could be perſuaded ſhe was out of danger, he conſented to quit England, for a time, and with a dejected countenance and faded form, he, with a heavy heart, bade adieu to the manſion which contained all he loved: his departure turned the attentive affection of the reſt entirely on Helena, who was ſome weeks before ſhe could leave her dreſſing-room; her health returned ſlowly, but her ſpirits were fled.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXX.

LORD Charles accompanied his brother as far as Dover, in order to render the ſeparation more gradual, and if poſſible prevent the melancholy reflections which his journey would give riſe to, and which, if alone, he would naturally indulge; when they were gone the dutcheſs, with unwearied care, attended to the reſtoration of the ſpirits as well as health of Helena; but this was a work of time, and the days, which as they paſſed gave back the youthful vigour of Helena, did not ſo quickly replace the chearful ſerenity which had been the inmate of her boſom; nor could it be expected; the affection ſhe had cheriſhed for lord Huntley, was the child of ſympathy, of honor, and of virtue, ſtrengthened by an intimate knowledge of his worth, and the tenderneſs of his attachment to her; it had made a part of her very being, and promiſed her nothing but peace and happineſs; ſuch a diſcovery then, as convinced her of the impoſſibility of an union, and obliged her to conſider him in another light, made her ſhudder at the idea of the danger ſhe had juſt eſcaped, and lament that ſhe had not ſtrength to ſuſtain it with firmneſs; the alteration it had cauſed, naturally oppreſſed a heart fraught with ſenſibility. She thought of his departure with ſorrow, and, while ſhe ardently wiſhed to take leave of him in perſon, ſhe would not mention her deſire, fearing that ſuch an interview would only prove her weakneſs,

weakneſs, and give an additional pang to a heart already too deeply wounded; ſhe therefore contented herſelf with receiving, through lord Charles, the prayers and affectionate remembrances of his brother, and by him conveying hers.

The letter from lord Farnham, which occaſioned the diſcovery, was, as ſoon as the duke could recollect himſelf, anſwered by a viſit from Mr. Nowel to that nobleman, to whom it was thought adviſable to explain the whole affair. This determination was founded on a hope, that, when time ſhould have mellowed the grief of the now acknowledged daughter of the duke, ſhe might be prevailed on to accept lord Farnham's hand and warm regard. During the abſence of lord Charles no viſits were received at Clevedon-houſe, as the ducheſs conſtantly ſpent her time in Helena's apartment, and the duke was not in ſpirits to ſee company; the world and its concerns were excluded, as perfectly unintereſting to the melancholy inhabitants: lord Farnham failed not to call or ſend every day; and, though he ſaw none of the family, his enquiries were received as flattering marks of his love for Helena, and anſwered with a polite and faithful account of her ſituation: to Helena herſelf they were not always communicated, for fear of alarming her delicacy, or creating a reſolution unfavourable to his future hopes, as it was certain that, had ſhe been called upon to declare her ſentiments of him at that time, they would have been a poſitive rejection, and an abſolute determination never to admit his addreſſes. When the day arrived on which lord Charles was expected back from Dover, one

of

of his ſervants delivered a letter to the dutcheſs; the meſſenger preceded his lordſhip only a few hours.

To the Dutcheſs of CLEVEDON,

My dear Mother,

YOU will be ſurprized to receive a letter, when you learn that a very few hours will behold me at Clevedon houſe again. The purport of this epiſtle is not to ſpeak either of my ſafety or return, but to prepare you for the reception of a fair fugitive whom I have encountered on my way. The weather proved ſo favourable, and Henry was ſo preſſing in his deſire that I ſhould accompany him beyond the limits of this iſland, that I could not reſiſt, ſo ſtepped into the packet and ſoon found myſelf on the Gallic ſhore. I was more ſtrongly tempted to viſit a country which has ſuch wonderful powers, of imparting conſequence to thoſe who but juſt breath its ſalubrious air, from my friend Sterne's remark, that "it is ſtrange that one and twenty miles ſailing "ſhould give a man extraordinary rights." Theſe conſiderations all operating together, I had ſcarcely ſettled all the important benefits of this voyage in my mind, when I found myſelf in the hotel at Calais, where, with my brother, I ſpent that day; in the morning I took leave of him, he purſuing his journey forward, I preparing to return to England. Before I proceed, I muſt obſerve that Henry, though low when I left him, was yet much more compoſed than I had reaſon to expect:

at

at firſt when we ſet out, he was in a ſituation truly deplorable; but the natural ſtrength of his underſtanding and the ſerenity of his temper, reſumed their ſway as we proceeded, and, 'ere I left him, he charged me with many kind and affectionate remembrances to our beloved ſiſter, to whom he intreated me to urge every argument favourable to a ſpeedy recovery of ſpirits as well as health; my father and yourſelf were included in his regards. When I was once more on board the packet, I diſcovered amongſt the paſſengers a very young female, whoſe external graces muſt have attracted the notice of every man, but to me there was ſo peculiarly intereſting an air of ſimplicity, ſo blended with the moſt penſive melancholy, that I earneſtly deſired to know what had cauſed the viſible ſorrow of one who could not have have paſſed her fifteenth year; I was almoſt tempted to uſe the language of ſcripture and ſay, "what aileth thee? and "why art thou diſquieted? and why is thy un-"derſtanding troubled?" The ton would not altogether juſtify ſuch an enquiry, as has been before obſerved. The ſituation into which you are unavoidably thrown, particularly in a ſmall veſſel, renders a degree of familiarity more excuſable than in any other place could be allowed; I availed myſelf of this privilege to addreſs ſome converſation to my fair companion; a young man of a pleaſant aſpect and genteel appearance, came frequently to aſk after her health, and how ſhe was accommodated; to theſe ſeemingly tender queſtions, ſhe anſwered with an averted face and a cold reſerve, and I could perceive a tear ſteal down her cheek: a ſentiment I will not call curioſity,

curioſity, for I hope a better motive actuated me, overcame the rules of politeneſs, and I ventured to aſk if I could be ſo happy to afford her any aſſiſtance? She ſighed and ſaid, ſhe was obliged to me, but feared her ſituation would not admit of any cure. Her manner was ſo artleſs and her grief ſo unaffected, that I was encouraged to requeſt ſhe would allow me to judge, whether it was beyond the limits of friendſhip to alleviate a diſtreſs I was certain muſt be unmerited on her part; "I think," continued ſhe, "indeed I did not deſerve to be ſo betrayed, and it is hard, very hard, to be carried to another country and there be married, contrary to my conſent." "If" ſaid I, "you will put yourſelf under my protection, no man ſhall inſult you with impunity." She regarded me with a look of anxious enquiry, which I eager to relieve, ſaid that ſhe might ſafely confide in me, and that I would convey her to you, where ſhe would be perfectly ſecure from every alarm. On the mention of your name, a gleam of pleaſure ſhone upon her countenance, and ſhe exclaimed, "You are perhaps lord Huntley, of whom I have heard my brother, the count de St. Clare, ſpeak, as of a particular friend." I explained to her who I was, and told her that I had juſt parted with lord Huntley, who intended to pay a viſit to her brother, and was now on his road into Germany for that purpoſe. "How fortunate am I," returned ſhe, "but it is only proper that, before I accept your kind offer, I ſhould explain the meaning of my preſent diſtreſſed ſituation: I reſided at Bruſſels with a relation for ſome years paſt, but was, by my brother's deſire, on the eve of returning to

St.

St. Clare, when my couſin, Madame Vendore, in order, as ſhe ſaid, to make my ſhort ſtay as pleaſant as poſſible, propoſed a party of pleaſure a few miles from Bruſſels; ſhe put herſelf and me, together with the young man you have ſeen ſpeak to me in the cabin, into a carriage, and we arrived at a pleaſant houſe where we dined: after dinner ſhe ſaid La Vere would ſhow me a beautiful proſpect, and ſo ordered the carriage and a female ſervant to go with us: I had no ſuſpicion, having been accuſtomed to ſee and converſe with La Vere from my infancy. We ſet out and travelled on for ſeveral miles, till I, wondering we did not reach the place made ſome enquiries, he then produced a note from Madame Vendore, wherein ſhe tells me that La Vere is ſo much in love with me, that ſhe could not refuſe to aſſiſt him in a ſcheme to make me his wife, and that when I read the paper I had then in my hand, it would be too late to recede, for that ſhe had taken care to acquaint my brother with my elopement, and he would be perſuaded it was my own choice. I wept bitterly; La Vere endeavoured to comfort me; but I deſired he would give me the only proof of his regard I could accept, which was to carry me back to St. Clare immediately: this he abſolutely refuſed to do. I made myſelf ſo ill with the grief I could not help indulging, that we were obliged to ſtop at a houſe on the road for ſeveral days; but at length we again ſet forward, notwithſtanding all my prayers and intreaties to return back. And now," continued ſhe, "as I have told you the whole truth, and you are not wholly unacquainted with my family, I claim that protection

you

you ſo generouſly offered to a ſtranger." I aſſured her ſhe might depend on me, and at firſt reſolved to tell La Vere that mademoiſelle St. Clare, had choſen me to convey her to England, till ſhe could acquaint her brother where ſhe was, and hear from him; but, on conſideration, I rejected this mode of proceeding, as La Vere would certainly diſpute my right, which to defend would ſtill involve the fair Laura in greater diſtreſs: we then concerted a plan between us, which was, that I ſhould appear ignorant of her ſtory, and when we reached Dover order my carriage; ſhe would watch an opportunity to leave La Vere and ſet out with me, informing him by a note, of her determination never to ſee him more. I ſend one of the ſervants forward with this account to you, which I haſtily write at Dover, and order him to beſpeak poſt-horſes to be ready at every ſtage for us. This ſcheme will I hope ſucceed; if not, I muſt adopt violent meaſures, for I am determined at all events to keep my word with my little friend, and place her under your protection. Adieu, my dear mother; I hope to find you all much improved: I know I need not ſay any more to beſpeak your kind reception of the Count de St. Clare's ſiſter: tell my ſweet Helena I bring her a companion not unworthy of her, and that I ſhall embrace her with the warmeſt affection ere long, till when I remain moſt faithfully your's,

CHARLES SIDNEY.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXI.

WHEN the dutcheſs had read the letter, her only concern was, that Lord Charles ſhould be under the neceſſity of proceeding to extremity with La Vere. Helena peruſed the letter, and partook of the fear; but they had ſcarcely expreſſed their apprehenſions, and diſpatched an account of this adventure to the duke, 'ere the carriage drove to the door, with mademoiſelle St. Clare and lord Charles in it. The dutcheſs went down to receive and welcome them; lord Charles introduced his companion, who anſwered his deſcription of her, for her opening beauty promiſed a perfect maturity; her reception was ſuch as to baniſh all fear of being conſidered as an intruder; ſhe was preſented to the duke, and then conducted to the apartment of Helena, where the joy of her deliverance, aided by ſo delightful a welcome into a family of diſtinguiſhed merit, as well as rank, was confirmed by the attentive gentleneſs of one nearer her own age: Helena, with a ſweetneſs which never forſook her, careſſed the fair ſtranger, who was not devoid of gratitude. The whole tranſaction was again diſcuſſed, and it was agreed that the duke ſhould write an account of it to lord Huntley, and that Laura ſhould accompany his letter by one to her brother; ſhe was too much fatigued to write that day, it was therefore poſtponed till the next. Helena was pale and thin, weak and low-

low-ſpirited, but ſhe was free from all other bodily diſorder, and endeavoured to regain her wonted chearfulneſs; the artleſs converſation of her young companion, prevented her dwelling ſo much on paſt events, and ſhe took pains to conquer a reluctance to mix in ſociety; a few friends and intimates were admitted once more, and amongſt them, as a proper compliment to his unremitting attention and enquiries, lord Farnham was received merely as a friend; his behaviour to Helena was reſpectful and delicate; ſhe ſpoke of lord Huntley with affection but firmneſs, and her effort ſeemed to be crowned with ſome degree of ſucceſs, for chearfulneſs had lighted up her pale countenance with a gentle gleam, when her compoſure was again diſturbed by the arrival of letters from lord Huntley: her reſolution was not ſo great as ſhe had hoped, and, when the duke gave it into her hand, a feint colour paſſed acroſs her cheek; ſhe trembled as ſhe attempted to break the ſeal; ſhe laid the letter on the table, and walked to the window, but in a moment returned, and, quietly taking it up, opened it and read: it was a large packet, to the contents of which ſhe paid the utmoſt attention; the trickling tears "chaſed one another" down her face, and a ſoft melancholy overſpread her countenance; ſhe ſighed frequently, and when, ſhe had finiſhed, exclaimed, "Do you, O my brother! moſt eſtimable of men, do you conſpire againſt me? Here madam," continued ſhe, "read the too kind and cruel letter, and pity your poor Helena; part of the contents relate to mademoiſelle St. Clare, which you will be ſo good to communicate to her." While the dutcheſs was reading

the

the letter, the duke taking the hand of his daughter ſaid, "My loſt, my deareſt Helena, what would I not do to remove the diſtreſs in which I have involved two of the moſt amiable children in the world? but wherefore do you accuſe Henry of conſpiring againſt you?" "Ah! my lord," replied Helena, "rather teach me how I may alleviate the misfortune I am the cauſe of, tell me how I ſhall reſtore peace to the boſom of a father and a brother I ſo tenderly love; but I cannot comply with my dear Henry's requeſt; where ſhall I find his reſemblance? how then can I think of marrying?" "Henry" ſaid the duke, "has then anticipated my wiſhes; will you not, Helena, endeavour to follow ſo diſintereſted, ſo neceſſary a piece of advice? your brother would not urge a ſubject which may be repugnant to your preſent feelings, if he did not know that the happineſs of your future life and peace, as well as that of all your friends, demand ſuch an alteration as marriage will make in your ſituation; let me owe to my beloved child, the reſtoration of my domeſtic felicity, and let me behold my Helena the wife of a worthy man, capable of feeling her virtues, and guarding her purity from the cenſure of an ungenerous world." Helena wept, and anſwered, "You ſhall determine for me, my lord, I am yours, diſpoſe of me as you pleaſe; if, by ſacrificing myſelf, I can give you back the happineſs I have robbed you of, command me and I will readily obey." "My ſweet child," continued the duke, "imagine not that I wiſh to ſacrifice your peace to my own; but you are ignorant of the world, and know not that, tho' innocent as miniſtering angels, you

ſhall

ſhall not eſcape calumny. There are thoſe who endeavour to reduce all virtue to the ſtandard of their own imperfections, and, from the depravity of their own hearts, judge of others: our unfortunate ſtory is too well known, and will quickly be made quite public; and, after the acknowledged and mutual affection of Henry and yourſelf, ſhould you remain ſingle, I tremble to think, that ſlander might taint, with her infectious breath, the now ſpotleſs fame of my darling child. I know a man, whoſe affection for Helena does him honor, and commands my regard; lord Farnham is of a rank to place the virtues of my child in a proper light, he will be happy to guard you from all diſtreſs, and I believe him a man of honor." Helena ſhook her head and replied, "I will not diſpute your choice and judgment, my lord; but to me there are many objections to lord Farnham; however, if you approve him, I am content to ſubmit."

"My beloved Helena," ſaid the dutcheſs, whoſe attention was called from the letter to the converſation, "you have beheld his lordſhip with an eye of prejudice, and I fear my Helena will not find a man more unexceptionable in all reſpects than lord Farnham: I mean not to recommend a libertine, but I think the unlimited affection that nobleman has expreſſed, for my dear Helena, will render him an object worthy of further regard. I long to ſee you at the head of a fortune, which will beſtow on your liberal and benevolent heart, the power of diſtributing bleſſings to all around you; to behold you the wife of an adoring huſband, while, with your native grace, you ſhine in every ſituation of

life,

life, you muſt doubly excite our love and admiration, when performing theſe ſacred duties with true propriety: but come," continued ſhe, "I forgot that our little friend is impatient to hear news from St. Clare." She then gave the letter to Laura, who read the following confirmation of her peace.

ALLOW me, moſt amiable of women, to join my ſincere congratulations to thoſe of our ſympathiſing friends, on your reſtoration to health, and I will hope to tranquillity; for a mind like Helena's, ſo duly tempered with ſenſibility and reaſon, with gentleneſs and ſtability, with religion and virtue, will ever extract the ſweeteſt conſolation from a conſcious innocence and pure intentions; and, while we both lament that the degree of conſanguinity we ſtand in to each other was kept ſecret ſo long, we muſt acknowledge the delicacy that prompted the concealment; we muſt allow for the feelings of a man, whoſe only deviation from a conduct truly worthy of him has doubtleſs cauſed the moſt painful emotions; nor can we wonder, that he ſhould wiſh to bury in oblivion, the unfortunate events of a haſty attachment; or that, while he could with pleaſure contemplate the excellent qualities of his lovely daughter, he ſhould be anxious to preſerve the memory of her mother from diſgrace, and the unſullied boſom of peace from reflecting with uneaſineſs, on the only fault of a beloved and affectionate parent: with me theſe reaſons are ſufficiently powerful to reconcile me to the conduct our father ſo kindly laments for our ſakes; and the well known goodneſs of my dear ſiſter's heart and temper induce me to believe ſhe allows them full weight; and I am

inclined

inclined to think we were permitted to wander in a labyrinth of error for a time, in order to convince us that perfect enjoyment was never deſigned to reward even virtue like yours in this life; and that to exerciſe that virtue, is to refine it, and render it fit for an aſſociation with a ſuperior order of beings in a celeſtial habitation.

Since I am forbid to purſue the line I had fondly traced in imagination, to ſecure, along with my own, my dear Helena's happineſs, ſhe will excuſe me, if, ever anxious for her welfare, I mention my deſire of ſeeing her united to a man of honor and worth: ſuch qualities as heaven has beſtowed on you, ought not to be buried in retirement, or loſt to the world; they ſhould ſhine forth with all their luſtre in ſome conſpicuous ſituation, and contribute to reward the merits of ſome happy man, who can be capable of feeling and cheriſhing the virtues of an amiable companion. I do not mean to hurry you into an haſty connection; on the contrary, it ſhould be well conſidered, before you engage yourſelf to perform duties, I am certain no circumſtance in life could make you neglect. The character of him who ſhall preſume to think of Helena for a wife, muſt be unqueſtionable, and without the ſhadow of a blemiſh; if ſuch a one there be, and his kind ſtars ſhall conduct him to his kindred ſoul, accept him, my beloved ſiſter; confirm the returning peace of your brother, who can know no joy if you are not bleſſed with all the happineſs this world can give, and who can never behold with cold indifference, and repining ſelfiſhneſs, your ſecured felicity. I left England with

with an aching heart, and a mind torn by conflicting paſſions; to be deprived in a moment of my deareſt hope, to quit the object of my tendereſt affection, while ſhe laboured under a conſuming diſeaſe, were trials too great to be ſuſtained with patient inſenſibility; I was tortured to agony, and it required all the fortitude I could gather, from a conſideration of your peace and that of my moſt valued relations, from the dictates of prudence as well as integrity and honor, to prevent my return to Clevedon Houſe: I conquered myſelf at length, and proceeded to viſit an old and much eſteemed friend in the Count de St. Clare, at St. Clare in Germany, hoping to receive ſome alleviation of the painful reflections cauſed by ſo recent a misfortune. On my arrival I was conducted to the Count, whom I found in a ſituation little likely to afford me the conſolation I ſought; he received me however with all the warmth of friendſhip, and for a moment I forgot that I had bade adieu to Helena, that ſhe was ill, and I was unhappy; the deluſion was ſhort, and memory, too faithful to ſorrow, awakened me to all my former diſtreſs. St. Clare read my diſordered ſtate of mind in my countenance, and eagerly enquired the nature of my inquietude: in his generous and faithful boſom I ventured to lodge all my grief, to which he lent a patient attention, and the various turns of his animated countenance convinced me he was not inſenſible to them. When I had made an end of my narration, of which the greateſt part was a deſcription of Helena, the count exclaimed, "What a fatal ſecrecy! I lament your misfortune from my ſoul: ſuch a woman deſerves your affection, but adds

poignancy to the grief of being deprived of her; but remember, Huntley," continued he, "remember your Helena is endowed with virtues to juſtify your eſteem, and, as a ſiſter, to ſuſtain the honor of your family, while a ſentiment of regret fills your boſom, yet an equal degree of reſpect and admiration will blend themſelves with it, and help you to regard with a leſs tender emotion the inimitable graces of the too charming Helena; you have a conſolation in the qualities which firſt created your affection; it is not ſo with every one: you may remember when laſt we were together, I ſpoke to you of a young and beautiful ſiſter, bequeathed to my care by the will of our father; Laura Tereſa St. Clare, was inferior to none in outward charms, but, as a friend and brother, the graces of her mind called forth my warmeſt eſteem and approbation; her education was committed to the inſpection and judgment of a relation of our mother, whoſe ſpecious virtues deceived me into a belief that ſhe alone was capable of adding accompliſhments to finiſh the natural beauties beſtowed on my ſiſter. I frequently ſaw her, and as frequently diſcovered an improvement in her; was I not then juſtified, my friend, in believing that Laura Tereſa would be an ornament inſtead of a diſgrace to a noble and ancient houſe? I regarded her with the tendereſt affection, and promiſed myſelf much happineſs in ſelecting for her approbation and choice a man worthy to poſſeſs ſo great a treaſure; ſhe has moſt cruelly diſappointed all my hopes, tarniſhed the name of St. Clare, and doomed herſelf, I fear, to miſery. Contrary to my inclination, I yielded to her requeſt of continuing ſome time

longer

longer with her friend; not that I had reaſon to ſuſpect the blow that threatened me, but that I wiſhed to introduce to the reſt of our relations one they would be proud to acknowledge. A few days ago, as I was indulging the moſt pleaſing ideas, I was ſurpriſed and beyond meaſure ſhocked with the contents of this letter," ſaid he, putting one into my hand, which, with his leave, I tranſcribe for your peruſal.

To the Count de ST. CLARE.

My Lord,

I AM concerned to be under the neceſſity of breaking the unwelcome tidings of your ſiſter's elopement to you. She left my houſe in private a few days ſince, with La Vere, a young man your lordſhip may remember to have ſeen; he has been frequently at my houſe on buſineſs which he tranſacted for his father, who is my ſteward. I was ignorant of an attachment between them, not ſuppoſing my couſin Laura would condeſcend to encourage a regard for one ſo much beneath her in rank; it was therefore out of my power to provide againſt the unfortunate elopement, which I did not diſcover till too late to purſue them: I received a note from Laura laſt night, to acquaint me that ſhe was to be married in England, to which country ſhe was then on the road. I ſhould have diſpatched an account of this affair immediately to St. Clare, only I waited to receive certain intelligence of the fugitives, and indeed hoping to ſpare you the

mortification of knowing it, had your ſiſter wiſely returned home again. I ſhall not preſume to dictate to your lordſhip on this occaſion, as your better judgment will direct you how to act; but I ſincerely deplore with you, the wound your honor, and that of your family, has ſuſtained by the inconſiderate raſhneſs of a girl, whoſe conduct reflects on me, who unfortunately took the care of her education. Your lordſhip will, I truſt, acquit me of any neglect, and believe me your ever faithful but afflicted friend,

ELIZA VENDORE.

"As ſoon as I had read the deteſted letter," continued the Count, "rage and grief ſeized me; I curſed the villain, who had dared to breathe his inſolent paſſion into the ears of a child, whoſe inexperience had ruined her; but I gave little credit to my plauſible couſin for her profeſſions of ſorrow and ignorance. Undetermined how to act, I ſpent the firſt day in deliberating with myſelf, the reſult of which was, to ſend a faithful fellow, on whom I could depend, to Bruſſels, to learn the exact truth of Madam de Vendore's relation, and to be directed in future by the truth or falſehood of it; for, if I found Laura had practiſed the art laid to her charge, and, un-encouraged by our deceitful kinſwoman, had withdrawn herſelf from my protection, I reſolved to leave her to the fate ſhe had ſo raſhly choſen; if, on the contrary, I diſcovered that her youth and innocence had fallen a prey to the intereſted art of a baſe contrivance between La Vere and his miſtreſs, I ſhould then think myſelf juſtified in receiving and protecting the dear unfortunate girl, as far as ſhe had

left

left me power. While my ſervant was abſent I felt the moſt torturing ſuſpenſe, from which his zeal and activity haſtened to relieve me, if poſſible. By the help of a preſent and a little gallantry to one of Madam Vendore's women, he learned, that the miſtreſs's affairs were in a very deſperate ſituation, and that her ſteward, old La Vere, had offered to ſettle them to her ſatisfaction, if ſhe would help to forward a match between his ſon and Laura Tereſa St. Clare, whoſe beauties had created a paſſion in the youth. Regardleſs of the honor of her relations and every better ſentiment, ſhe, with the moſt genuine depravity, filled the mind of her ward with a notion that, like a tyrant, I intended to ſacrifice her to my own ambition and intereſt; and, having made a monſter of me, ſhe eaſily prevailed on that ill-fated child to forſake her moſt ſincere friend, and fly into England with a man whoſe perſonal appearance might win the regard of one ſo inexperienced, and whoſe attentive reſpect was ſufficient to convince her of his merit. I will own to you, my dear friend," ſaid the Count, "that I feel the utmoſt indignation at the idea of beholding a man, whoſe extraction is from the dregs of the people, allied by ſo intimate a connection to my family: but, had La Vere poſſeſſed virtue ſufficient to deface in any degree a ſtain the baſeneſs of his origin fixes upon me, I would have endeavoured to forget the diſgrace, in tenderneſs for my ſiſter; as it is, I am not only to honor her degenerate choice, but the abandoned vices of her worthleſs huſband. It was but yeſterday I received the cruel intelligence, which my man extorted from the infamous ſlave of an equally infamous miſtreſs;

treſs; and when you arrived, I was undetermined whether I ſhould ſet off inſtantly for England, or write to you, with an account of the unhappy affair, and truſt to your friendſhip to find out the poor victim of avarice and affected regard: had there been a ſhadow of hope that I ſhould have been in time to ſave her, I muſt have been a villain to heſitate; but they took care I ſhould know nothing of it, till too late to prevent the evil they meditated. And now, my dear Huntley, you are convinced that you have companions in diſtreſs; for, have I not a reaſonable cauſe to lament the loſs, the misfortunes and diſgrace of a ſiſter, while you mourn over the virtues of yours? I own you have much to regret, and time alone can relieve you; but your mind, Huntley, ſhould be ſuperior to deſpair, and you ſhould endeavour to ſet ſuch an example as your Helena might follow."

I have given my dear ſiſter a circumſtantial account of the affairs and converſation of the Count de St. Clare, in hopes to divert her melancholy, and exerciſe her benevolent feelings for the diſappointment of the reaſonable hopes of an amiable brother. I know my ſweet Helena will contribute to ſoften the voluntary hardſhips of the unfortunate Laura, whoſe youth may and will excuſe her indiſcretion. In my next letter I hope to tell you where ſhe is to be found, as the Count will make it his buſineſs to learn her ſituation, but at preſent thinks it moſt prudent to take no notice of them, till application is made to him, as he is the perſon offended: he has had an account of her actual marriage, from his unworthy relation at Bruſſels; ſo that nothing

can

can now be done but to render the circumſtances of this unfortunate connection as little diſtreſſing as poſſible. You, Helena, will, I hope, pay ſome attention to the former part of my letter concerning yourſelf; conſider all our happineſs is at ſtake; I am baniſhed my native country and the beloved ſociety of near friends, who cannot be ſupplied by any foreign connection, though indeed my kind friend, the Count de St. Clare, has poſtponed his viſit to England out of regard to me, and almoſt forgot the griefs that have juſtly invaded his quiet, to alleviate as much as poſſible thoſe of your ever affectionate brother, and ſincere, devoted friend,

HUNTLEY.

CHAP. XXXII.

WHILE Laura was dwelling on the contents of lord Huntley's letter relative to herſelf, the duke and dutcheſs were trying to improve the favorable moment in which Helena ſeemed inclined to relinquiſh her own ideas of happineſs for theirs: every argument was urged by them which experience might juſtify, and affection could dictate; and the heart that could withſtand the united entreaties of thoſe who, having ſome right to command, adopt the more gentle part

part of perſuaſion, muſt either be inſenſible or depraved. Not ſuch Helena's: though not convinced by, yet ſhe yielded to their arguments, and, throwing herſelf into the arms of the dutcheſs, ſhe exclaimed, "You have conquered! heaven knows your peace is dearer to me than my own, elſe, oh! merciful God, could I conſent to become lord Farnham's wife!" "My love" replied the dutcheſs, "I am convinced you have miſtaken the character of lord Farnham, and that, ſenſible as he has always been of your merits, he will do all in his power to make you happy, otherwiſe be aſſured neither your father nor myſelf would urge you to accept him." The duke withdrew when he had heard her reluctant conſent pronounced, unwilling to delay acquainting lord Farnham with the change in his favor, becauſe, when that nobleman was once informed of their determination, there would be no altering it. Lord Charles, who had in ſilence ſeen the conflict between inclination and gratitude, lamented the fate of his unhappy ſiſter; lord Farnham was no favorite of his; but, as he could aſſign no reaſonable cauſe of diſlike, he determined to take no part in the affair, for he felt a ſtrong repugnance to force the unwilling tongue of Helena to pronounce her own ſentence; but, when conſented, he aſſured her in the moſt warm and lively terms, that he ſhould ever hold himſelf bound to reſent any injuries offered to her, and that, if lord Farnham ſhould ever fail to treat her with the utmoſt kindneſs and affection, he ſhould anſwer it to him. Helena, ever grateful for his numerous inſtances of regard, admired his animation, and thanked him for the intereſt he took

in

in her welfare, though ſhe knew that his youthful ſpirit joined to the moſt ſincere regard, could avail her little, if, when lord Farnham's wife, he ſhould chooſe to treat her with over-cruelty or neglect. The duke preſently entered the room again, and ſaid that he had diſpatched a letter to lord Farnham, acquainting him of the happineſs that awaited him, "But I do not mean, Helena," continued he, "to hurry you into a marriage, without giving both parties time to be perfectly acquainted with each other: but from you, Helena, we expect a different conduct from that which moſt of your ſex falſely imagine is a proper diſplay of their ſenſibility; from you I expect a firm conſiſtent behaviour in the hour of trial, and I know you will ſuſtain it and be happy; you will give a ſhining proof of your virtue, and cannot fail of attaining that peace which flows from a celeſtial fountain; the permanency of truth ſheds a luſtre on every word and motion of yours, and you will yet enjoy a calm ſerenity, and give to poſterity an example worthy their imitation; you have made a noble effort to conquer every improper indulgence of ſorrow, and diſdained to ſit down repining, becauſe you are forbidden to chuſe your own road to happineſs; you are and ever will be the delight of your friends, and our laſt days ſhall be rendered peaceful by your virtues."

"You offer me," cried Helena, "a noble reward for any ſacrifice I could make, and your praiſe, my lord, is a powerful incentive to purſue only ſuch a line of conduct as may evince the truth, and juſtify the uſe of it. If I have any merit, it is to you I am indebted for it; to you lord Farnham will owe the beſt qualities he ſhall

diſcover in me, and to preſerve your good opinion inviolate, ſhall be the buſineſs of my life." Then, turning to lord Charles, ſhe ſaid, "To you I truſt that a faithful account of all that has paſſed here ſhall be tranſmitted to lord Huntley; tell him I obey him, but tell him too that I expect to behold him reſtored to his native chearfulneſs, or I ſhall loſe one of the principal motives for my compliance; tell him that, when all the tumults of this agitated boſom ſhall have ſubſided into a calm inſenſibility, we may meet in peace." The dutcheſs coming in, ſhe gave to Helena an open letter; the characters ſhe inſtantly knew to be lord Farnham's; ſhe trembled as ſhe read the following lines:

To his Grace the Duke of CLEVEDON.

YOUR grace's letter has reſtored me to life and happineſs, my tranſport on reading it exceeded all bounds, and my gratitude for the condeſcending goodneſs of the ſweet arbitreſs of my fate, ſhall end only with my life; every hour of which ſhall be devoted to prove my affection, and ſolicitude, for the happineſs of the ineſtimable treaſure you promiſe me; it ſhall ever by my moſt favorite employment to ſteal, by tenderneſs and attention, every ſorrow from the loved boſom of my Helena, and fill the void with that ſerene happineſs which appears to be its native inhabitant; the rude blaſt of misfortune ſhall not, if I can avert it, aſſail the ſweet innocence and purity of a heart whoſe value is above all price; but words, my lord, are inadequate to convey my

ſentiments

ſentiments of love, admiration and reſpect; I ſhall then avail myſelf of your permiſſion to behold one ſo lovely and beloved, and in perſon teſtify my obligations to your grace, who will allow me to aſſure you, that I am you happy and grateful devoted

FARNHAM.

CHAP. XXXIII.

HELENA dropped a tear on the letter as ſhe returned it, and, ſoftly ſighing, exclaimed, "It is over, my fate is fixed! I will try," ſaid ſhe, to the dutcheſs, "to receive lord Farnham as he may wiſh and you approve." "My love," replied her grace, "I have no doubt but your conduct and behaviour will be proper on all occaſions, and lord Farnham is not ignorant that he owes his happineſs to that native goodneſs which prompts you to liſten to the affectionate advice of your anxious friends; he will be content to watch your growing regard for him, and warm into life a ſentiment he does not expect to have created already in the boſom of Helena. I know you too well to ſuppoſe that you can withſtand the gentle efforts of conjugal affection, or that you will withhold from an admiring and grateful huſband, the tribute of eſteem and love you ſo amply beſtow on your friends. It is neither the intention of your father, lord Farnham, or myſelf,

ſelf, to hurry you into a precipitate marriage; but, from the unaffected judgment you poſſeſs, we are convinced you will not protract it by any unneceſſary delays; and, as I wiſh that my dear Helena ſhould be gratified to the utmoſt of my power, if there is any thing you deſire to have done either by the duke or lord Farnham, prior to your wedding, I am certain you may command both; and I ſhould imagine it would be agreeable to you, if your friend Miſs Weſtmorland attended you on your approaching nuptials, if it is, my love, I will write an invitation to that young lady, which you may incloſe to her yourſelf." Helena replied "that nothing could give her more ſatisfaction than to have her dear Maria with her on that occaſion," and accepted the offer of the invitation from the dutcheſs, who inſtantly ſat down to write a few lines for that purpoſe, which contained a polite and preſſing requeſt for her immediate preſence in town; when Helena had received it, ſhe retired to incloſe it in a letter of her own, and the dutcheſs took Laura into her dreſſing-room to anſwer lord Huntley's mention of her, and to eaſe the Count her brother's fears for her ſafety. Helena when alone was diſtracted with contending emotions. "My God!" ſhe exclaimed, "can it then be true, that I have inconſiderately promiſed to marry a man I almoſt deteſt? am I to be lord Farnham's wife? muſt I indeed be united to that impetuous man? I am moſt aſſuredly to be that wretch." Such was the ſituation of the lovely but unfortunate victim; nor could the ſoundeſt underſtanding, or the cooleſt judgment, condemn a ſenſibility ſo natural and lively, and even the philoſopher muſt allow

allow a powerful conflict between the feelings of the heart, and the dictates of prudence and duty, and that time alone could reſtore ſuch a ſoul to its peaceful ſtate. Helena, however, conſcious that, to indulge the diſlike ſhe felt to lord Farnham, would ſoon become criminal, made every effort in her power to reconcile herſelf to her lot, and tried to dwell on the bright ſide of his character; but her heart was heavy, and her eyes dimmed with tears, when ſhe began her letter to Maria; the purport of it juſtified her ſorrow, for it invited that friend to witneſs a ſacrifice of her happineſs and inclination, and in a language which ſpoke diſtreſs, and yet too weak to paint the agonies of the mind which dictated it.

To Miſs WESTMORLAND,

My beloved Maria,

AFTER the diſcovery which my laſt letter conveyed to you, what will be your aſtoniſhment when I tell you, that, only half recovered from a dangerous illneſs, with a mind oppreſſed and weary of its earthly abode, I am now preparing to give my hand to a man I neither love nor eſteem; yes, Maria, the purport of my letter, together with the one incloſed, is to invite you to be preſent when your friend reſigns herſelf to wretchedneſs; for ſuch, I fear, muſt be my fate! my virgin heart has nouriſhed a fatal and a dangerous paſſion, and the perfections of the object muſt ever create a perfect eſteem. I was juſt beginning

beginning to feel a ſmall return of ſerenity, and a hope that my future days would, at leaſt, paſs calmly on, had dawned upon me, when the ſtern commands of propriety call on me to obey and reſign myſelf its victim; urged by the miſtaken kindneſs of friends, to whom I am bound by gratitude and affection, I am compelled to become the wife of lord Farnham; the proſpect is melancholy indeed, and heaven only knows how I ſhall be able to ſuſtain this laſt and final blow to my peace; let me add my ſincere requeſt, that you may be preſent at the ſo much dreaded ceremony, and help me to ſupport myſelf with ſome degree of firmneſs; at leaſt I ſhall have the ſatisfaction of pouring all my griefs into the boſom of my firſt, my much loved friend. Since I wrote to you we have got an addition to our family party, a very pleaſing, amiable little girl, ſiſter to the Count de St. Clare, to whom our dear Henry is now upon a viſit at his eſtate in Germany. Laura is an affectionate, good-tempered girl, whoſe youth had very near drawn her into an imprudent and unhappy connection, from which ſhe was reſcued by lord Charles: the particulars of her ſtory you ſhall know, when I have the ſatisfaction to embrace my dear Maria in Clevedon Houſe, till which time I muſt take my leave of you: with a heavy heart, I am about, perhaps for the laſt time, to ſign myſelf, though your ever faithful and affectionate friend, yet no longer I fear,

HELENA SIDNEY.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXIV.

THE next morning Helena was taught to expect lord Farnham: her motions were tardy, from a tremor on her nerves, and an unconquerable heavineſs of heart and ſpirits: when breakfaſt was ready, Laura entered her room and found her pale and trembling; her ſweetneſs of temper had endeared her to her young companion, who beheld her diſtreſs with unaffected grief, which ſhe expreſſed with the ſimple ſincerity of a youthful heart; but Helena, unwilling to wound the feelings of another, endeavoured to aſſume a more compoſed aſpect, and accompanied Laura into the breakfaſt room, which ſhe approached with ſenſations not unlike one, who, clinging to life, is ordered to lay down his exiſtence in a moment moſt dear to him. Had it pleaſed heaven to ſnatch Helena from a fate ſhe dreaded, ſhe would have thought herſelf happy in the exchange: but it was not to be; ſhe was to perform the part in life providence had allotted her; ſhe was to prove that human foreſight is confined to narrow limits, and that mortals are not to chooſe the exact road to happineſs in this world, which, if they were to judge, ſeems beſt to ſuit their ſentiments and inclination; human felicity muſt always be incomplete, and no ſafer or more direct path to it can be found than a reſignation to the divine diſpenſations, and a ſteady adherence to the dictates of religion, virtue and reaſon, which will be found to coincide and ſtrengthen each other,

and

and ſhed on the mind poſſeſſed of them a ſoft and peaceful hope. The converſation at breakfaſt was calculated to ſupport the ſinking ſpirits of Helena; but, while ſhe felt the truth and acknowledged the juſtice of their arguments, her heart ſickened at the approaching interview, and it required all the fortitude ſhe could gain from the purity of her intentions, to ſuſtain her on the trying occaſion, when ſhe was to confirm with her own mouth a ſentence of condemnation, for ſuch ſhe could not help conſidering it. The hour, the inſtant arrived; lord Farnham's carriage ſtopped, and in a moment he entered on the wings of joy; his countenance, at all times expreſſive and handſome, now ſhone with peculiar luſtre, and on the fair hand of the trembling and terrified Helena, firſt proclaimed the rapture ſhe had inſpired him with; he then paid his reſpects to the reſt of the family, and ſeated himſelf by Helena, whoſe countenance betrayed none of the delight which animated lord Farnham's: the vivacity which had at firſt ſparkled in his lordſhip's eyes, aſſumed a more tender expreſſion, as they gazed on the woman whoſe conſent he came to ſolicit, to confirm the hopes the duke had given him; and, with a ſoftneſs he well knew how to put on, he thanked her for the honor and felicity ſhe allowed him to expect, and the flattering confidence ſhe repoſed in him. "My lord," replied Helena, with a voice moſt muſically melancholy, "you know it is not in my power to return the affection you offer me as it deſerves; I have been unfortunate in my regard for a man who will ever hold that place in my heart which a ſiſter may with virtue and honor beſtow; if, after this declaration, you ſtill

think

think my hand worthy your acceptance, I have promiſed to ſubmit to the deſire of my good friends." "My love," anſwered his lordſhip, "is not unknown to you; the firſt moment I beheld you, I beheld the woman who could alone make me happy, and, if I had not been permitted to call you mine, I never ſhould have married; but," continued he, "my better ſtars prevail, and I take your offered hand, truſting to the virtues which ſhine round you for every other felicity, and as the ſecurity for my peace." The duke and dutcheſs here joined in a converſation which was evidently painful to Helena to ſupport, and lord Farnham's viſit ended only with the morning; he retired, after having declined an invitation to dinner, ſaying he would do himſelf the honor of ſpending the afternoon at Clevedon Houſe; he departed with that complacency which an aſſurance of ſucceſs in a private ſcheme beſtows, but he left his intended bride with a feeling little ſhort of deſpair; his abſence was however a temporary relief to her haraſſed ſpirits. Unwilling to comment on the paſt, or think of the future, it was ſufficient for Helena to fix her ideas on any ſubject which could afford her the ſmalleſt degree of comfort; ſhe thought of anſwering lord Huntley's letter, but found herſelf ſo unequal to the taſk, that ſhe threw down the pen and gave way to her tears.

The duke and dutcheſs conſidered the ſtep they were taking as the only one which could reſtore Helena to peace, and place her in an eligible ſituation; remove the bar to lord Huntley's reſidence among his friends, and give them back a ſon ſo juſtly beloved; they conſidered that, in a marriage with lord Farnham, Helena would obtain

that

that conſequence and protection ſhe would never in a ſingle ſtate arrive at, and they viewed her preſent diſtreſs as a circumſtance which would have happened whenever a change of ſituation had been propoſed to her, and flattered themſelves, that a very little time would convince her ſhe might yet be happy; they looked upon lord Farnham as a man of honor, and had no doubt but his conduct and affection would remove every unfavorable idea Helena might entertain of him. It depends on the various accidents in every ſituation, and on the various opinions formed on the ſame ſubject, to reſolve whether their dependance was founded on a rational or erroneous ſyſtem; and the ſucceeding events in the life of Helena, will, in ſome meaſure, exemplify the truth or falſhood of the principles which actuated each party; and the profound caſuiſt muſt determine how far friends and parents are juſtified in perſuading or compelling thoſe, over whoſe minds or notions they have full power, to enter into engagements of a ſacred nature contrary to their inclination or conſent? and whether they do not take upon themſelves the weight of the evils which may follow? to the ſame caſuiſt alſo it muſt be referred, whether any motive can excuſe a woman's marrying a man ſhe diſlikes? or if that man can fairly complain of that want of affection which he was apprized of, and which left him at liberty to decline the connection?

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXV.

IN the evening lord Farnham again made his appearance, and Helena was obliged to ſubmit to a tedious repetition of his affection and gratitude. The dutcheſs, who was no ſtranger to the feelings of Helena, in order to relieve her as much as poſſible, propoſed cards, to take off the too pointed attention of his lordſhip, which greatly diſtreſſed her; and, though it was certain that not one of the party could attend or was intereſted in the game, they ſat down to whiſt: a melancholy recollection that her uſual partner in this family combat, was no longer to chear her with his preſence, animate her by his ſmile, nor delight her with affectionate and delicate attention, forced itſelf on the mind of Helena as lord Farnham took his ſeat oppoſite to her; 'tis true the affection of her preſent partner was as lively, but it was more ſelfiſh, it rather ſought to gratify the poſſeſſor than alleviate the too poignant ſenſibility of the object of its regard; lord Farnham was as attentive as lord Huntley could have been, but the deſire of the one to oblige was pure and unmixed, that of the other violently forced itſelf on the obſervation; in ſhort, it was impoſſible for lord Huntley to offend, and almoſt as much ſo for lord Farnham to pleaſe, ſo powerful is prejudice; though Helena either had or feigned ſhe had a reaſon to juſtify the different ſentiments ſhe entertained of each. Lord Charles and the fair

Laura

Laura St. Clare, amuſed themſelves in the mean time with a ſprightly repartee, which, while it ſerved to keep alive the attention, diſplayed the good humour of the parties. When the firſt rubber was over, lord Charles took lord Farnham's ſeat, and Mr. Nowel the duke's; the dutcheſs and Helena ſtill keeping their places at the card table: lord Farnham ſtood by Helena's chair, and by his frequent addreſs to her ſo much diſcompoſed her, that ſhe became totally unconſcious of her ſituation; lord Charles endeavoured to laugh, and by ridiculous obſervations to take off the embarraſſment Helena betrayed; he inſiſted that lord Farnham ſhould not talk to his partner; "I ſhall call your lordſhip to an account" ſaid he, "for the loſs of ſeveral tricks:" lord Farnham laughed in return for his affected anger and importance, and walked to the other end of the room, where the duke and he entered into ſerious diſcourſe on preliminaries which were to be ſettled prior to the intended wedding, and Laura, taking the hint, ſeated herſelf by Helena.

CHAP. XXXVI.

LORD Farnham now ſpent ſome part of every day at Clevedon Houſe, where he was conſidered as one of the family. Lord Huntley and the Count de St. Clare had both anſwered the

the letters concerning Laura, wherein the latter expreſſed his utmoſt gratitude to lord Charles, for ſo fortunate a deliverance of his ſiſter, and gladly accepted the dutcheſs's invitation to Laura, to ſpend the remainder of the year in England, while the Count accompanied his friend on a purpoſed tour through France and Italy: he alſo mentioned that he had received intelligence from a friend at Bruſſels, that La Vere, as puſillanimous as preſumptuous, had returned home, content to be deſpiſed and laughed at, firſt for his villainy, and then for meanly ſuffering himſelf to be tricked out of a woman, for whom he had forfeited his character to honor and honeſty; and the Count concluded with ſaying, that he ſhould chaſtiſe the wretch as he deſerved, but he believed nothing was to be apprehended on his account, and that Laura might ſafely continue in England. Lord Charles, by Helena's deſire, had made known to his brother the ſituation of affairs at Clevedon Houſe, and that, complying with his injunctions, ſhe conſigned herſelf to the will of his friends. The neceſſary preparations were now almoſt concluded, and lord Farnham preſſed Helena to name the day which was to confirm his happineſs; ſhe wiſhed not to diſpleaſe him by protracting the term of her liberty to any diſtant period, but yet found herſelf wholly unable to fix the irrevocable ſentence of her miſery to any particular date: ſhe had made an effort to conquer her repugnance to the union, and her diſlike to the object; ſhe ſucceeded but indifferently, for a more intimate knowledge of lord Farnham only ſerved to convince her ſhe muſt be unhappy; ſhe diſcovered, for it was her intereſt to be as minute in her obſervations

ſervations as poſſible, that his temper was impetuous and fierce, impatient of control on the ſmalleſt contradiction, and ſhe reſigned herſelf to his power with this only alleviation of the painful ſacrifice, that ſhe obliged her friends in their own way, and reſtored to the earneſt wiſhes of his father, the beſt, the moſt affectionate of ſons.

CHAP. XXXVII.

WHEN the writings were finiſhed and ready for ſigning, a day was fixed for the gentlemen of the law to attend, and, at the appointed hour, lord Farnham gave them the meeting. Helena was called upon to be preſent, accompanied by the dutcheſs and Laura: ſhe entered and ſeated herſelf to liſten to what might have gratified ambition and avarice, but ſhe was devoid of both; if a ſplendid ſettlement could have rendered her approaching union leſs terrible, ſhe muſt have been pleaſed, for the proviſion made for her was ſuch as ſuited the large fortune and great liberality of lord Farnham, who was eager to prove his love on every occaſion; and the duke, who wiſhed to have Helena conſidered as part of his family, had beſtowed a fortune on her worthy his rank and generoſity. Helena heard it all without a ſingle emotion of pleaſure, and, when lord Farnham deſired to know "if any thing had been omitted that

that could give her the leaſt ſatisfaction, and if all that had been done met with her approbation?" ſhe calmly repiled "that he had been too profuſe, as a much leſs ſettlement would have gratified every wiſh of her heart." The pen was given into her hand, which trembled as it was about to ſign what was only preparatory to a reſignation of its liberty. This ceremony concluded, the lawyers withdrew, and ſhe was called upon to name a day for the marriage: ſhe mentioned a diſtant one: lord Farnham intreated it might be earlier, and ſhe conſented to compromiſe the matter with him, for, as ſhe was to be wretched, ſhe ſcarcely thought it worth contending for a few days; her feelings were almoſt ſtupified, and ſhe had neither ſpirit nor reſolution enough left to diſpute, ſo left it to the dutcheſs to name the day, which was at length fixed for that day fortnight. Miſs Weſtmorland was now hourly expected, and preparations were immediately ſet about; clothes, equipage, &c. were ordered, in which nothing was neglected that could gratify the vanity of youth, or was proper as an appendage of rank or fortune; the wardrobe provided for Helena was elegant, ſplendid, and extenſive; in the choice of which the dutcheſs exhibited her taſte and liberality: Helena had deſired that ſhe might neither be conſulted, nor informed of any thing relative to the approaching change. Maria at laſt arrived, and received ſuch welcome as Helena's friend had a right to expect; when ſhe had embraced her, with a pleaſure unknown for ſome time paſt, Maria expreſſed, with all the warmth of friendſhip, her ſorrow to behold ſo great an alteration; the vivacity which had

adorned

adorned the features of Helena, was no more; pale and penſive, her countenance betrayed one part of her unhappy ſtate of mind, and on the faithful boſom of her friend ſhe repoſed all her griefs. "This evening" continued Helena, "my dear Maria will behold the man who is ſoon, too ſoon, to be the huſband of Helena, but a firſt interview will only give you a favorable impreſſion of lord Farnham, for prejudice muſt allow him the advantages of external grace, but ah! my dear Maria, I fear his mind is not calculated to convey happineſs to mine." Maria tried to reconcile Helena to a ſituation which was now unavoidable, and to which ſhe had conſented. "If," ſaid ſhe, "lord Farnham is really ſo unfortunately poſſeſſed of unamiable qualities, you will rather create his reſentment than conciliate his affection by your unrelenting coldneſs; do then, my dear friend, endeavour to overcome what I hope is an unjuſt prejudice." Helena ſhook her head.

In the evening lord Farnham came, and Maria could not but acknowledge, that his perſon, his addreſs and manner, were calculated to engage; ſhe was introduced to him as Helena's-friend, and received from him the moſt polite attention. After ſome little time, he preſented Helena with his family jewels, which had been ſet in the moſt brilliant taſte for this occaſion; Helena received them gravely, and, unlooked at, begged the dutcheſs to take charge of them for the preſent; lord Farnham looked mortified at her coldneſs, and Maria caſt a glance of diſapprobation on her friend. Though lord Farnham was evidently chagrined at the little impreſſion favorable to him he had been able to make on Helena, yet, as he

he knew that his wish, not hers, would be ultimately accomplished, he endeavoured at all times to appear pleased.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

THE eve of the much wished for day by one party, and so much dreaded by the other, at length arrived. Maria had tried in vain, to compose her friend; her spirits were all in alarm; her beating heart seemed impatient of its confinement, and her whole frame was violently agitated. Lord Farnham was delicately tender, yet visibly elevated. The duke and dutchess beheld Helena with an anxious concern for her future happiness; lord Charles, ever affectionate, felt all her distress; and the youthful Laura, grateful for the frequent instances of friendship and good nature she had experienced from Helena, expressed a lively sorrow to see her so much depressed: when lord Farnham took leave, Helena burst into tears; Laura threw her arms round her neck and wept also; Maria was too much affected to speak, and lord Charles could not suppress the rising emotion; the dutchess, with peculiar gentleness, tried to sooth her dear Helena, and the duke, unable to bear the sight of her distress, left the room; "My beloved sister," said lord Charles, "if your marriage is incompatible with your happiness, why will you persist? let no consideration tempt you to be wretched;

let me follow lord Farnham, and at leaſt defer the celebration of your nuptials till you can reconcile yourſelf better to it, or break it off for ever." "Do," cried Laura, "my ſweet Helena, do let lord Charles ſpeak to him." "No," ſaid Helena, recovering herſelf, "O no; 'tis true I am weak, very weak, but do not believe I will trifle with my friends and lord Farnham in ſo unworthy a manner; I have promiſed and to-morrow will perform it; I will give my hand to lord Farnham, would I could as eaſily beſtow my affections on him; but time may work wonders," continued ſhe, trying to force a ſmile. "I truſt it will," replied the dutcheſs, "indeed I cannot doubt it, or elſe no conſideration ſhould tempt me to urge you, my love, to fulfil your engagement;" ſhe then embraced Helena, and deſired ſhe would endeavour to compoſe herſelf. Maria took hold of her friend's arm and led her up ſtairs, after they had both taken leave for the night of the reſt; Helena kiſſed Laura; gave her hand to lord Charles, and expreſſed her ſenſe of his kindneſs; ſhe then accompanied her friend, whoſe endeavours were not altogether thrown away on her; Helena was convinced ſhe was wrong, yet ſcarcely knew how to adopt a ſentiment which, however neceſſary, was yet foreign to her heart and feelings.

When lord Farnham got home he ſat down to give the Count de Granville the ſequel of his ſucceſs, and an account of his marriage on the morrow.

My

My dear Count,

BEFORE this letter reaches the Chatena de Granville, or wherever elſe you may be, I ſhall be a ſecond Benedict; to-morrow the lovely Helena is to be mine, beyond the malice of fate to prevent. I told you in my laſt that I was reſolved, if there was power or invention in man to conquer the reluctant fair one; and I hold ſtratagem in love equally honourable as in war; I was however, ſpared the trouble of concerting plans for this purpoſe, for my formidable rival proved to be the brother of my enchantreſs, ſo that the principal obſtacle to my wiſhes was removed; my letter to the duke, begging his permiſſion to addreſs his beauteous ward, for ſuch ſhe then paſſed, produced a general ecclairciſſement, on which it appeared, that the duke had in his youth, attended to the ſeducing voice of love and gallantry, and that my Helena was the conſequence of an illicit paſſion; her mother, in this only inſtance culpable, nobly and generouſly refuſed to become dutcheſs of Clevedon, and reſigned her right in favor of the preſent dutcheſs, who in return promiſed to be mother to her beauteous daughter Helena: on the death of her real mother, ſhe was introduced into the family as a ward and relation of the duke's; the effects of concealing her birth from the young lords and herſelf were, that lord Huntley and ſhe encouraged a mutual attatchment for each other; the whole family were thrown into confuſion by a diſcovery of this; the duke and dutcheſs, ſhocked to death at the idea of an inceſtuous affection between a brother and ſiſter of

this pious houſe, kindly undertook to plead my cauſe with the drooping flower of their family, whoſe ſenſibility received ſuch a wound from the knowledge of her birth, that ſhe ſunk under a dangerous illneſs, from which ſhe is however, now perfectly recovered, only a little pale; yet ſhe yielded to their intreaties, coldly and reluctantly yielded to become my wife: if love had not reigned an abſolute monarch in my breaſt my pride would have rejected the cold aſſent; I had a little ſtruggle with the blind deity, but he conquered and I accepted the hand of Helena, for, with a ſolemn gravity, ſhe told me ſhe had no heart to beſtow, and that lord Huntley ſhould ever poſſeſs a ſiſterly affection in her boſom. I reſign my honor into her poſſeſſion, without a fear of its being tarniſhed; for the little prude is as piouſly rigid as ever a ſaint in the calendar; gentle and timid as the dove, with all the ſenſe and accompliſhments I could wiſh. It is my preſent intention to detach her affections as much as poſſible from the formal family ſhe now belongs to; I believe I ſhall introduce her to the counteſs at your Chatena de Granville, in the courſe of the next ſummer, particularly if Huntley returns to England, for Farnham Abbey is too near Barnhurſt Caſtle for me to be at eaſe if he is there; though, by my ſoul, I pity him, for ſhe is ſuch a woman, as might charm a man to his deſtruction, or lead him to happineſs. To-morrow makes her mine, and like a ſtupid dog, here am I writing about her as compoſedly as if ſhe was my mother. Adieu, I ſhall expect your congratulati-

ons,

ons, and you may believe me, whether married or ſingle, your faithful friend,

FARNHAM.

Say handſome things for me to the Counteſs, and my old friend Madamoiſelle Granville.

CHAP. XXXIX.

THE morning dawned on which Helena was to become lady Farnham, and ſhe beheld the light that ſhone upon her, as the laſt ray that would behold her free from confirmed wretchedneſs; her heart ſhrunk at the idea of the approaching ſolemn ceremony, which invaded at once her peace and liberty; but from the ſo much to be dreaded change there was no retreat; it was therefore neceſſary, and only proper, that ſhe ſhould at leaſt appear leſs reluctant; for this purpoſe Maria, like a faithful friend, inſtead of ſoothing her ſorrow, and lamenting with her for what there was no remedy, ſeriouſly repreſented to her, the conſequences of letting lord Farnham ſee with what a melancholy preſentiment of future evils, ſhe approached the altar, and how very unwillingly ſhe gave him her hand; that, whatever his conduct might hereafter be, ſhe had yet no right to find fault with him, and that if ſhe gave him cauſe to ſuſpect he was diſagreeable to her, ſhe might have too much reaſon to repent it. Helena acknowledged

ledged that her friend was perfectly right; "but oh! Maria," continued she, "will the heart forget its emotions, and beat only as we wou[illegible] it, or reason and prudence direct? will nature yield her feelings to those of duty? and can I, with even unconcern, marry a man, whose voice makes me shrink within myself, whose love is torture to me, and whose temper is too impatient to sooth me into a forgetfulness of a felicity I was once allowed to expect? Ah! no, lord Farnham is to fix the colour of my future life, and it will certainly be a dark one, Maria; but, that you may not justly charge me with creating his resentment, I will try to assume a chearfulness, at least a composure, foreign to my heart."

Helena's maid and the dutchess's woman now appeared to equip her; she submitted to their endeavours to render her figure as complete as dress could make it; but alas, it was not in the power of borrowed ornament to bestow that enlivening charm, grief had stolen from her countenance; yet it was not either in sorrow or sickness to deprive her of that beauty, nature with a bounteous hand had lavished on her; that description of Sterne's Maria might be justly and happily applied to Helena; she was of the first order of fine forms; affliction had touched her looks with something that was scarcely earthly; still she was feminine, and so much was there about her, of all that the heart wishes, or the eye looks for in woman, that lord Farnham could not but accept her, though the traces of a recent and ardent affection still kept their station in her heart, and barred his entrance there. It was not without much agitation that she underwent the task of being dressed;

Maria

Maria and Laura aſſiſted the ſervants, and at length ſhe was ready to make her appearance in the breakfaſt-room, where lord Farnham and lady Frances Sundan already were. The dutcheſs conducted her to them, and they ſat down to a grave and almoſt ſilent breakfaſt Helena durſt not truſt her voice to utter the moſt trifling obſervation. Lord Farnham's happineſs received ſome alloy from her viſible dejection, but yet he was happy, and his countenance betrayed it; the reſt were too much intereſted to be at eaſe. At eleven the carriages were ordered; when they were ready, an univerſal tremor ſeized Helena, ſhe ſhook from head to foot; her reſolution died away, and her heart grew ſick with apprehenſion. Lord Farnham took her hand to lead her to the duke's coach. The dutcheſs having embraced her ſaid, "I truſt, my lord, it is needleſs to recommend our dear Helena to your tendereſt affection, or the choice ſhe has allowed us to make for her, will cauſe us endleſs regret." "I hope," replied his lordſhip, "my conduct will ever juſtify your grace's partiality to me, in thus beſtowing upon me the moſt amiable of women; from you I receive her as the firſt bleſſing of heaven, and I muſt be blind to my own happineſs, to neglect the felicity of one to whom I ſhall be bound by the moſt endearing ties." They proceeded to the carriages; in the firſt, lady Frances Sundan, Laura, Maria and Helena, were conducted to St. George's Church, in a new and elegant coach of lord Farnham's; the duke, lord Charles, lord Farnham and Mr. Nowel followed. When the ceremony began, Helena reſolved if poſſible to ſupport herſelf; with a voice ſcarcely audible ſhe pronounced

the

the final ſentence, and as the fatal words ſounded on her ear, that made her, without all doubt, the wife of lord Farnham, recollection had nearly forſook her. Lord Charles, whoſe natural vivacity was ſubdued by the ſtrength of his affection for his ſiſter, could not endure the ſight, but retired to another part of the church. Laura wept, and Maria was only reſtrained by a fear of weakening the little reſolution her friend poſſeſſed. The duke's countenance betrayed an anxious gravity, and lord Farnham's eyes were fixed on his lovely wife, with a mixed expreſſion of pleaſure and ſolicitude in them. When the ceremony concluded, Helena received the congratulations of her friends, not with ingratitude, but with a fatal preſentiment of their inefficacy to impart or procure for her the good they expreſſed, and ſhe knew they ſincerely felt for her. Lord and lady Farnham, lord Charles, and Maria returned back to Clevedon Houſe in one coach; the duke, lady Frances, Laura and Mr. Nowel in the other; and thus for ever ended in the boſom of Helena, every ſhadow of hope which had hitherto ſuſtained the wretched offspring of an unhappy attachment. Thus was beauty, virtue, ſenſe and unrivalled accompliſhments, conſigned to the arms of a man, whoſe libertine principles and violent temper were ill calculated to reſtore the ſoft power of peace to the wounded boſom, or adminiſter happineſs to Helena; ſhe was however his wife, and no human means were to diſſolve an union contracted in the face of heaven and the world.

Helena ſeized the firſt opportunity allowed her to retire with her friend Maria to her dreſſing-room,

room, there to compoſe her thoughts, and recollect her ſcattered ideas; to reflect on the paſt tranſactions of her blameleſs life, and if poſſible, to derive ſome conſolation from the purity of her intentions. "Maria," ſaid ſhe "the fate of your unhappy friend is no longer doubtful; help me then to reſiſt the riſing torrent of affliction which has overwhelmed my boſom? if I am doomed to expiate by my ſufferings, the crime of my exiſtence; if I am to be the humble inſtrument of averting the anger of heaven from my parents, I ſubmit; I am content to bear the utmoſt malice of fate. Henry too, my dear brother, may now return to England. But, good God," continued ſhe, "haſt thou ordained me to be eternally miſerable, to make others leſs ſo? has thy all-ſeeing wiſdom condemned me to a life of wretchedneſs, to remove the evils of this mortal exiſtence from ſome more favoured of thy creatures? or doſt thou intend to refine and purify me by trials? thy juſtice is unqueſtionable, thy mercy infinite, and I will learn to ſubmit to thy decrees without a murmur." "My dear Helena," ſaid Maria, interrupting her, "let me intreat you not to exhauſt your ſpirits, or you will never be able to ſupport a proper degree of compoſure before your friends, and I am certain you would not wiſh them to think you ſo unhappy; only then determine to be leſs miſerable, and depend on it you will be ſo; lord Farnham has the ſtrongeſt affection for you, but take care how you change it into diſlike by your behaviour." Lady Farnham's woman entered with a letter directed for Miſs Sidney; Helena opened it, and its contents plunged a dagger in her heart; if before ſhe was un-

happy, this left her totally without a hope of ever being otherwiſe, and ſhe exclaimed, "My God! am I then married to a villain?" ſenſe forſook her, and ſhe ſunk into the arms of Maria, which were extended to prevent her fall to the ground; but life and memory ſoon returned together, and ſhe put the fatal letter into her friend's hand, and ſaid "Read, Maria, and confeſs my deſtiny is a ſevere one." Maria read as follows:

CHAP. XL.

Madam,

YOU kindly promiſed to receive any account of my improved ſituation, with the ſame goodneſs which prompted you to reſcue me from impending death: this would be my apology for the preſent trouble I give you, if another and more powerful motive did not influence me. My eſtabliſhment in the Convent de St. ———, has afforded me time and opportunity ſeriouſly to reflect on my paſt life, and to endeavour to amend it. I believe I mentioned the inducement I had for fixing on Paris as the place of my retreat, that of having a relation ſettled in the houſe I am now an inhabitant of. A few days ſince, my couſin received a letter from England, wherein you, madam, were ſpoken of as on the point of marri-

age

age with lord Farnham; ſhocked at the idea of ſo much perfection being united to ſo much real depravity, I conſider it as my duty to inform you that he is the moſt cruel and baſeſt of mankind; it is to him I owe my ruin and diſgrace; it is to him, madam, that I muſt attribute the uneaſineſs I once ungratefully cauſed you; he is the author of all my miſeries, but God forbid he ſhould make you unhappy. Lord Farnham firſt betrayed my unſuſpecting youth, then left me to the ſhame I deſerved: you early won his heart; and he inſiſted on my writing you that letter which firſt made me known to you: terrified at his menaces, and fearful of the poverty which encompaſſed me, I complied. Your benevolent and benign charity recalled me to a ſenſe of my duty, and I undeceived you; but it was dangerous for me to remain in England after, as I was too well acquainted with the temper of the man I was conſtrained to obey, to truſt to his generoſity or his mercy, and therefore reſolved to fly for ever from his power, which you enabled me to do. I ſhould be the moſt worthleſs of my ſex, if I could quietly ſuffer you to be impoſed upon by a libertine, cruel as he is depraved; ſhun him then, madam, nor join your gentle virtues to qualities too oppoſite to agree: at leaſt, you will pardon the liberty I take, in pointing out your danger, and believe me ever faithfully your obliged, and devoted humble ſervant,

CAROLINE DANBY.

Could there have remained a doubt of the truth of Caroline's aſſertions, ſhe had incloſed a note ſhe received from lord Farnham, at the time

ſhe

ſhe wrote the letter which cauſed Helena ſo much uneaſineſs; the characters were too familiar to Helena, to leave her at a loſs to gueſs the author, though no name was ſigned. There was nothing left for Maria to urge in favor of an abandoned man, who was moſt unfortunately the huſband of her deareſt friend; aſtoniſhed at his baſeneſs, ſhe could only heave a ſigh, that the letter had not arrived in time to prevent the ſacrifice of all that was amiable and lovely; yet ſhe was unwilling to let Helena know how much ſhe deteſted the conduct and character of one ſhe was doomed to ſpend her days with; or with how much contempt, ſhe ſhould ever look upon a man ſhe had endeavoured to like, and reconcile her friend to. Supporting the drooping head of Helena, ſhe continued ſilent, having no comfort to offer. Lord Charles, ſurpriſed at their long abſence, had knocked at the door, but the two friends were ſo wholly abſorbed in their own painful reflections, that they heard him not; he opened it, and beheld his ſiſter pale and trembling, leaning on Maria, from whoſe eyes the pearly drops of pity and friendſhip diſtilled; amazed at the ſight he haſtily advanced, and demanded the cauſe of Helena's diſtreſs. The letter lay open on the table before him, Maria glanced a look upon it. "Good God, !" exclaimed he, "what new occaſion calls forth this diſtreſs? Can this letter be the author of a ſcene ſo deplorable? and who can it be from that has the power of afflicting?" "It is better," replied Helena, faintly, "that you ſhould remain ignorant of the contents, it is ſufficient that they have made me miſerable:" "My beloved ſiſter," ſaid he, "why

ſhould

ſhould you hide from me what creates your unhappineſs, can you doubt my affection?" "No," anſwered ſhe, "indeed I do not, but why ſhould I make you uneaſy on my account, when it is impoſſible for you to alleviate my misfortunes?" "I hope not," replied he, "and I intreat that I may at leaſt, partake of them, you will not deny me this ſatisfaction." "I only wiſhed," ſaid ſhe, "to ſpare you the pain; but do as you pleaſe." He took up the letter, and as he read, indignation flushed his cheek, and darted from his eye, and he exclaimed, "Execrable villain! unmanly monſter! and muſt ſuch a wretch call Helena his? No, 'tis a ſufficient reaſon to ſeparate, you never ſhall live with him, Helena; I will myſelf reſent the inſult offered to both you and my brother, and tell this lord what I think of his conduct." "I conjure, I intreat you to reflect," cried Helena, in agony; "do not plunge me in everlaſting and in incurable diſtreſs; remember that lord Farnham is now the huſband of your ſiſter, nor can I dare to reſent his conduct; ſave me then from the horrid ſcene of death, that muſt enſue from ſuch a revenge as you meditate; promiſe me to be eternally ſilent." Reaſon reſumed her ſway over the mind of lord Charles, and, ſoftened by the tears and entreaties of Helena, the repreſentation of Maria, and his own reflection, he faithfully promiſed to bury the ſecret for ever in his own breaſt. "Your peace," ſaid he, "is dearer to me than any other conſideration, be ſatisfied then that I will take no ſteps that may diſturb it; but can I think with patience on the vile conduct of one to whom you have been fatally perſuaded to give your hand? 'tis a moſt

unfortunate

unfortunate and ever to be lamented connection; from my ſoul, I grieve, to think that you are ſubject to the power of a man capable of the baſeſt arts to obtain his purpoſe." "Indeed," anſwered Helena, "I much, and with reaſon, fear it will prove to me the moſt unhappy compliance, but 'tis now too late to repent; I muſt endeavour to diſſemble all my life, nor venture to give vent to the honeſt indignation of my heart; I muſt teach my face to wear a ſmile, whilſt my boſom is filled with anguiſh; I have vowed before a great and juſt God, to honor and obey this diſgrace of his ſex and humanity; to love him is out of my power, nor ought he to expect; it and I can only hope that it will pleaſe heaven either to remove me from a ſituation I may not be able to ſuſtain, or to make ſuch a change in lord Farnham's character and principles, as may remove the juſt prejudice the good muſt feel againſt him." The genuine drops of virtuous ſorrow trembled in her eye as ſhe ſpoke. "I commit myſelf to that providence which has hitherto protected me, and ſince I cannot avoid my fate I muſt learn to bear it." "You have," replied lord Charles, "come more refined and bright from every trial, may this be the laſt you are ordained to endure, and may lord Farnham, animated by your excellent example, copy it, and make you happy as you deſerve." "Whatever," ſaid Maria, "may have been the failings of his lordſhip's paſt conduct, it is reaſonable to hope, that as the well known virtues of his wife have inſpired him with love and reſpect, he will be induced to imitate them; his greateſt enemy muſt allow him a good underſtanding, and though it is impoſſible to defend his infamous

beh.viour

behaviour to an unfortunate woman, and his arts to divide two people equally amiable; yet, when he is fully acquainted with the value of an oppoſite conduct, I cannot but believe, he will adopt it, and I am certain, that the line Helena means to purſue, muſt captivate him; but I hear," continued ſhe, "lord Farnham enquiring the way to your dreſſing-room, try then to compoſe yourſelf a little if poſſible." Lord Farnham inſtantly opened the door, before Helena could baniſh the marks of ſorrow from her countenance. "You do not intend," ſaid he, taking her hand, "to exclude me, I hope, from your ſociety; I poſitively muſt," continued he, while a reproachful ſmile played on his features, "be admitted into the party, nor ſuffer Miſs Weſtmorland and lord Charles to engroſs you; beſides I came ambaſſador from the court below, to require your preſence." Helena turned from him with an involuntary motion; he looked ſurpriſed, when, recollecting herſelf, ſhe ſaid "I am ready to attend you my lord, we will go down if you pleaſe." "I wiſh," replied he, "to ſpeak one word to you." Maria and lord Charles could not but take the hint to leave the room. Helena wiſhed to follow, but could not refuſe to hear what he had to ſay. "My beloved Helena," continued he, "has any thing happened to diſtreſs you? or am I to believe your repugnance to fulfil your engagement with me, is the cauſe of a ſorrow I cannot but perceive? If I am ever to meet you thus, I know not how I ſhall ſupport myſelf; your tears are a reproach to me, and your dejection will make me lament that I accepted an unwilling conſent to oblige your family; when I gave my happineſs

pineſs into your keeping, I thought it ſecure as virtue and gentleneſs could make it; this viſible conflict you maintain with your feelings, teaches me to expect nothing but a diſappointment of my moſt ſanguine wiſhes and hopes of happineſs; allow me to ſay, it is a conduct inconſiſtent with your general character, and muſt be deſtructive to our mutual peace; for, are we not bound to contribute to the felicity of each other?" "My lord," replied Helena, "I hope we ſhall improve upon one another; I profeſſed not love; I never deceived you; but you thought fit to take me without the ſtrength of affection you now ſeem to expect; you may command my time and actions, but the heart, my lord, will not be controlled, the unconquerable mind ever you muſt yield to." "I would rather," ſaid he, "win your regard than exert the power I might make uſe of to obtain your company and converſation, but I know you will try to conquer theſe emotions, and bleſs your happy grateful huſband." "I will do all my nature is capable of," anſwered ſhe, "to remove every diſagreeable ſentiment, but if you find me ſubject to all my ſex's faults, you have no right to be either ſurpriſed or angry." Lord Farnham expreſſed his ſenſe of her goodneſs and deſire to oblige; then led her down to the company.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLI.

SIR James Sundan joined the party at dinner, and lady Frances, elate with the proſpect of happineſs promiſed her brother, on whom ſhe had ever looked with a moſt partial eye, really enjoyed that ſatisfaction the reſt endeavoured to aſſume in their behaviour. Helena, who had regarded that lady with ſome degree of prejudice, on account of the part ſhe had taken to bring about her marriage, could not now withhold that eſteem ſhe ſeemed to deſerve from her, and which her unwearied kindneſs ſo well merited. Lord Farnham had conſented to ſpend the firſt week at Cleverdon Houſe, which was ſome conſolation to Helena; but thoſe days, like every thing which could impart pleaſure to the mind of his wife, vaniſhed quickly, and the one on which he had fixed for their removal to his houſe in Portman Square, arrived. Lord Farnham, whilſt in the preſence of the duke and dutcheſs, behaved with the moſt unremitting kindneſs and attention to Helena, but how his conduct might alter when no longer under the conſtraint of their obſervation, ſhe was yet to learn, nor did ſhe preſage any change to her advantage. It was ſettled that Laura remained with the dutcheſs, while Maria accompanied her friend, and lord Charles propoſed returning to Cambridge, immediately on his ſiſter's departure. Lady Farnham had as yet ſeen no company, but, on her taking poſſeſſion of her new habitation, ſhe was to undergo the ceremony

mony of receiving a croud of acquaintance of both her own and lord Farnham's. They were to dine at Clevedon Houſe, and take their leave in the evening. His lordſhip had deſired Sir James and his ſiſter to meet them, along with a few of his moſt intimate friends. Lord Farnham had conſented to ſtay at Clevedon Houſe with a good grace, but he was not ſorry when the time had elapſed, as the company of the duke and dutcheſs afforded him little ſatisfaction, ſo different were they from his aſſociates. Lord Charles, who beheld him almoſt with abhorrence, had contributed little to his amuſement; lady Farnham then, was on all accounts, the ſole object of regard, though he ſometimes condeſcended to beſtow ſome little notice on Laura, but it was the kind attention paid to a lovely agreeable child, who, when troubleſome, you can diſmiſs or withdraw yourſelf from, without rudeneſs: to Maria he was polite, as the friend of lady Farnham; he requeſted the duke and dutcheſs to ſpend the evening in Portman Square, but they excuſed themſelves. "I hope, my lord," ſaid he to lord Charles, "you will accompany us; we ſhall not be quite en famille, my brother and ſiſter, with two or three other of my friends, will give us the meeting; and my little Laura will meet a conductor home again, for Miſs Weſtmorland does us the honor of taking up her abode in Portman Square;" lord Charles bowed aſſent, and the remainder of the day was ſpent in ſettling plans for the ſummer months, when Barnhurſt Caſtle and Farnham Abbey ſhould again be occupied. The dutcheſs expreſſed her deſire of having Helena ſome part of the year her gueſt;

"My

"My health," ſaid ſhe, "does not permit me to leave my own houſe often, and I ſhall be much mortified if our dear Helena does not divide her time between us and her other friends, we ſhall my lord," continued ſhe, "think ourſelves very ill uſed if you do not make ſuch an arrangement as will give us your company frequently." Lord Farnham replied, that "Helena's inclination ſhould be his, and he ſhould be happy to attend her on a viſit to their good friends whenever ſhe pleaſed, either in town or country." This was all they could deſire, and were much pleaſed with his readineſs to oblige them. The carriage was at the door. Helena trembled; lord Farnham roſe from his ſeat; the duke and dutcheſs embraced Helena, and poured as many bleſſings and adieus on her as if ſhe had been taking her final leave. Lord Farnham then led Miſs Weſtmorland to the coach; lord Charles, Laura, and Helena following, and in a few minutes they were ſet down in Portman Square, when lady Frances welcomed her ſiſter, with open arms, to her new abode, and lord Farnham followed her example, with a thouſand tender and affectionate expreſſions. Helena ſhrunk involuntarily from his careſſes, and found no pleaſure in his affection. Memory, ever buſy to torment, made many a painful journey back to thoſe days of uninterrupted harmony ſhe once enjoyed. Theſe excurſions of thought were not much to the advantage of her lord. She was conducted through the apartments, to take her choice: they were ſpacious, and furniſhed in the higheſt taſte; an elegant dreſſing-room had been purpoſely fitted up for her reception, but lord Farnham requeſted, that, if ſhe approved any other

better,

better, ſhe would take poſſeſſion of it. All rooms in that houſe were alike diſagreeable to Helena, and, as there was no poſſible objection to the one allotted her, ſhe ordered her woman to place her wardrobe there.

The company expected came early, and lady Farnham was introduced to a ſet of men to whom ſhe had hitherto been unknown, except ſeeing them in public; unlike the friends ſhe had been accuſtomed to converſe with, at Clevedon Houſe; their manners were rather gay than delicate; their deportment was eaſy and familiar, and their converſation rather animated than refined; they treated every ſubject with equal freedom, and diſplayed at leaſt, an intimate knowledge of ton. Helena, a ſtranger to them, was ſubject to their minute obſervations, and though her appearance muſt have anſwered the deſcription they had received, they could be no judges of the beauties of her mind and underſtanding; for, low-ſpirited and unhappy, ſhe took but a ſmall ſhare in the converſation; ſhe felt no inclination to exert herſelf, and was careleſs what opinion they might form of her. Lord Farnham, eager to juſtify his choice to the world, of which he conſidered his friends a great and important part, as the directors of taſte and elegance, and the judges on every article of faſhionable life, took no ſmall pains to draw forth the numerous graces he knew animated the ſoul of Helena: he judiciouſly choſe thoſe topics of converſation ſhe was moſt likely to ſhine on, and where her judgment would direct her genius, and prove the truth and reality of his praiſe; though devoted to the purſuits of toniſh pleaſures, he was no languid ſon of the faſhion; his mind was active,

his

his affections warm, and, had they early in life been guided by a ſkilful hand to their proper channel, he might have proved an ornament and example to ſociety, and an honor to his rank and country; his underſtanding was naturally ſtrong, and his accompliſhments were ſuch, as ſet off an engaging exterior; his wit was brilliant and pointed; his ſatire keen and ſevere; and he poſſeſſed a fluency of expreſſion, with an elegant addreſs, accompanied by a tone of voice muſical and diſtinct; theſe endowments had made him an object of general attention to that ſex who are not inſenſible to thoſe agreements which render the tout enſemble ſo captivating; but to Helena's keener diſcernment, theſe qualifications only covered a violent temper, a haughty mind, and an unbounded indulgence of every wiſh; it was to be attributed to this propenſity to gratify his own inclination, that ſhe beheld herſelf the victim of his love and his power; for, had a more reaſonable diſpoſition directed his actions, he would never have united himſelf to a woman, however amiable, that gave ſo many and incontrovertible proofs of her diſlike to the connection. In the courſe of the evening, Helena, confirmed by her obſervations, that the animated expreſſion of her eyes, only ſpoke the intelligence of her underſtanding, and the ſtrength of her feelings; the harmony, and choice of her ſubjects, diſplayed the elegance of her education and aſſociates; and, while the friends of her lord criticiſed every word and look, they could not but acknowledge, that ſhe would have been angelic, if ſhe had poſſeſſed a little more ſpirit. One of theſe gentlemen obſerved to lord Farnham, that ſhe only wanted that je ne

ſcai

ſcai quoi, which ſhould diſtinguiſh a woman of faſhion, to render her perfectly enchanting; "ſhe is too formal, my lord; her manners, though gentle, keep one at a deviliſh diſtance; and it would take a man a century to become acquainted with her; it aſtoniſhes me how you ever conquered that dignified reſerve, ſhe has learned from the dutcheſs of Clevedon, who has the antique ſentiments of the laſt age." Lord Farnham replied to this limited panegyric, that "he had no doubt but lady Farnham, accuſtomed to a different line of company, would ſoon acquire that nameleſs grace only wanting to complete her numerous excellencies;" with a complacent ſmile, he added, "We ſhall teach her to throw off that reſerve you complain of, not that I wiſh my wife to encourage the familiar addreſs of every coxcomb." Could he have imparted happineſs to her, nature had laviſhly beſtowed every other endowment, and ſhe only wanted that, to call forth the vivacity ſo nicely blended with gentleneſs of diſpoſition, for ſhe had entered into life poſſeſſed of that delicate and refined chearfulneſs ſo much to be envied and admired; but the unfortunate events, which ſucceeded one another ſo rapidly, had extracted the ſprightly eſſence of her temper, and left in its ſtead a ſoft melancholy. She was now under a neceſſity of keeping a conſtant guard upon her words, looks and actions, fearful they might betray emotions, which ſhould ſubject her to the reſentment of him to whom virtue bid her direct her affections. To a mind like hers, open, candid and ingenuous, the reſtraint was moſt painful, and ſhe could alone indulge herſelf in an unreſerved expreſſion and deportment, when ſhe was allowed

lowed to devote her hours to the loved ſociety at Clevedon Houſe; her reception there revived a feint gleam of joy in her languid boſom; but the engagements ſhe was obliged to accept, prevented her having the ſatisfaction of ſpending her time often with her dear friends; lord Farnham took care to leave her ſo little time at her own diſpoſal, by involving her in a conſtant routine of amuſements. When dragged into public, adorned with all that could grace natural lovelineſs, ſhe would gladly have changed conditions with the moſt homely female ſhe ſaw; when, to gratify the pride and vanity of lord Farnham, ſhe was loaded with finery, her mind ſickened, and her perſon ſeemed to bend beneath the unenjoyed ſplendor; and, while ſhe was the envy of almoſt all who beheld her, ſhe found herſelf from rational cauſes, incapable of taſting the happineſs, which was generally thought inſeparable, from an honorable union with a young nobleman of diſtinguiſhed elegance, and poſſeſſed of a fortune to indulge every extravagant deſire. Very unlike the manners of a modern huſband were thoſe of lord Farnham; ſo far from ſeparating himſelf from Helena in public, he rather fell into the contrary extreme, and, by his conſtant attention to her, appeared to think there was not another perſon worthy of his regard: had ſhe felt the pureſt and warmeſt affection for him, ſhe was too delicate to give any diſguſting teſtimony of it, in companies where politeneſs bade her pay ſome reſpect to the civilities ſhe received; but, as it was, ſhe was aſhamed, and mortified, at a conduct which rendered them both objects of ridicule to the witty and cenſorious; ſhe would, if poſſible, have declined

clined appearing at any place where ſhe was ſubject to ſuch ill-timed aſſiduity; but lord Farnham felt a triumph in proclaiming to the world his conqueſt and prize, and was too careleſs of its opinion, to regard what comments might be made on his conduct, and the too viſible dejection of his wife. That fiend, too deſtructive to human happineſs, jealouſy, "had perched triumphant on "the noble's brain," and aided every other quality which could diſcolor life; actuated by a paſſion ſo fatal in its effects, ſo baneful to peace, which withers at his chilling touch, Lord Farnham was miſerable when Helena was engaged on the common ſubjects of converſation by any of her acquaintance, even if thoſe men he had himſelf introduced to her, paid her the attention due to her rank and merits. So inconſiſtent is this paſſion, that, while he felt the full weight of his own conſequence, he could not help conſidering every man of faſhion as dangerous and deſtructive to his influence over the mind of Helena. Thus tormented by a reſtleſs demon, his lordſhip was not ſorry when the ſeaſon of quitting town arrived, as in the country they might chuſe their own manner of living, unmoleſted by that ſwarm of gaudy inſects, diſtinguiſhed by the name of beaux, who hover round the reigning fair; who feed the vanity of the gay coquette; or languiſh out the heavy hours with all the faſhionable ennui at every place of polite reſort. Helena was not ſorry to quit a ſcene ſhe was not able to enjoy, and entertained a faint hope, that the ſhade of retirement would afford her ſome relief; ſhe prevailed on lord Farnham to engage Sir James and lady Frances Sundan, to accompany them to

Farnham

Farnham Abbey, and Maria had promiſed to prolong her ſtay with them; with this party, too ſenſible of her virtues not to contribute, if poſſible, to her tranquility, Helena truſted that ſhe ſhould eſcape the too pointed obſervation of her huſband; for, though every thought might have been laid open to the world, without incurring the ſhadow of blame, yet there are moments in every lady's life, in which it is pleaſant to indulge a ſilent contemplation on the preſent ſtate, and a recollection of the paſt; and this ſhe knew would be more eaſily effected, if lord Farnham's attention could be directed to render his houſe pleaſant to their gueſts, and he could be induced, by the company of Sir James Sundan, to leave her miſtreſs of her time and actions. The family from Clevedon Houſe, had left town a few days before them; and about the latter end of June they ſet forward to Farnham Abbey. The weather was ſo fine, that lord Farnham reſolved to drive himſelf and Helena in the phaeton, while Sir James, lady Frances, and Maria, followed them. To Helena this arrangement was not deſirable, and the journey, in conſequence of it, was tedious and unpleaſant; her feelings were allowed no relief from the importunate and reproachful tenderneſs of lord Farnham; he complained of her coldneſs and reſerve, charged her with ſtill preſerving too fond a remembrance of lord Huntley, and teaſed her till her ſpirits were quite weary. She found herſelf at length at Farnham Abbey, rejoiced to be joined by the other party, who arrived ſoon after them.

CHAP. XLII.

THE next morning, after breakfaſt, lady Frances propoſed a walk; as the plantations were ſo thick as to render them impervious to the heat of the ſun. "We muſt ſhew my ſiſter," ſaid ſhe, to lord Farnham, "her domain, and I muſt introduce a little nurſery of pheaſants, I was myſelf fond of, and which I will recommend to her protection." Helena approved the propoſal, and roſe to accompany lady Frances and Maria. Lord Farnham ſaid he would conduct Miſs Weſtmorland and Helena through the wood, and to whatever elſe was worthy obſervation; "though indeed," continued he, "I have not much reaſon to expect Helena will be pleaſed with improvements planned by me; I dare not hope ſhe will look with a partial eye upon a place which has the misfortune to belong to me." Helena ſuppreſſed the riſing ſigh, and mildly anſwered, "that, from what ſhe could diſcover of the ſituation from the windows, it was impoſſible not to be pleaſed with it." "I wiſh," ſaid his lordſhip, "it was poſſible for me to create one emotion of pleaſure in your boſom; that your ſenſibility can be rouſed, I know; that joy can animate your now languid features and ſparkle in your eye, I have alſo witneſſed; but it is not for me, who have the beſt right to expect it, to call forth thoſe charming ſymptoms of a feeling heart and lively affections; but you muſt allow me to obſerve,

ſerve, that, if I am denied this happineſs, I ſhall not tamely ſubmit to their being beſtowed on any other man." "My lord," replied Helena, whoſe ſpirit revived on the unmerited inſult, "If you thought me capable of deviating from the moſt rigid rules of propriety, much leſs fogetting what I owe to honor and virtue, why did you truſt your peace in the poſſeſſion of one you had ſo contemptible an opinion of? You were fully acquainted with my ſentiments before we married, and you might then have declined a connection which promiſes ſo little ſatisfaction to either; but I fear I am to believe, you accepted my hand only to tyranniſe over my feelings; to gratify the meaneſt of all paſſions, a love of power, and a ſentiment of revenge. Why will you make me repent having given you the means to render me a wretch?" The ſtarting tear proclaimed the departure of that animation which had prompted the reply, and dejection overſpread her countenance once more. Lord Farnham, ſhocked, and ſorry to have occaſioned ſo juſt an indignation, kiſſed off the falling tear, and tried to ſooth the ſoul of his Helena to its wonted calm.

CHAP. XLIII.

LET thoſe adventurous females, who raſhly connect themſelves with men of libertine principles, from the arrogant idea of working a reformation by the united powers of beauty and underſtanding, learn timely to diſtruſt their own powers, if they would eſcape a life of miſery. Helena, though bleſſed with all the valuable gifts of nature, enriched with every beauty and accompliſhment, painfully experienced the weakneſs of all thoſe charms over a mind devoted to its own gratification. Had ſhe voluntarily undertaken the taſk of reforming the manners and morals of lord Farnham, ſhe had deſerved to feel the mortification attendant on the diſappointment of a favorite ſcheme: not ſuch her expectations or hopes. Sir James looked quite out of patience, while the ſcene was acting; and lady Frances, who had, though innocently, occaſioned it, was infinitely diſtreſſed. Maria, anxious for the peace of her friend, and fully convinced of her uncommon merit, ſecretly lamented the ſacrifice ſhe had made to the choice of her family. They could none of them properly interfere; it would have been both dangerous and indelicate to attempt it. When lord Farnham had, in his own opinion, made ample amends for his unreaſonable anger, by condeſcending to acknowledge himſelf wrong, and had intreated Helena's pardon, the walk was again propoſed; the ladies ordered their cloaks,

cloaks, and they all ſallied forth. If beautiful woods; grounds laid out in the moſt elegant ſtyle; a clear, deep ſtream, conducted with taſte and judgment through the lawns and plantations, which ſerved at once to fertilife and adorn, could have imparted pleaſure, beyond the moment of contemplation, to the mind of their fair miſtreſs, Helena had received it here; for nothing could be more calculated to exhibit the taſte and riches of the owner. After a long ramble, in which lady Farnham expreſſed more pleaſure than perhaps ſhe really felt, they returned back, and the day concluded more harmoniouſly than it had promiſed in the beginning; for lord Farnham diſplayed more ſatisfaction and good temper than Helena had beheld in him ſince they bade adieu to Clevedon Houſe.

The underſtanding and judgment Helena poſſeſſed, were ſufficiently ſtrong, to guide her on all occaſions, with propriety and delicacy; and the native activity of her mind was ſuch, that, had ſhe been united to a man of a more reaſonable diſpoſition than lord Farnham, ſhe would have conſidered it as unneceſſary and even troubleſome, to apply to, and depend on her huſband, to direct the trifling occurrences of life; ſhe would rather have relieved him from the cares attendant on every ſtation, and reſted on her own knowledge and opinion, to perform the daily duties of ſociety; but in lord Farnham ſhe fairly beheld a man tenacious of his power; harſh in his reſentments; haughty to his domeſtics, and perpetually increaſing his expectations of herſelf; ſhe therefore thought it the wiſeſt and ſafeſt way to have no will of her own, but to direct all her actions

by

by his inclinations; had ſhe oppoſed him, it could only have proved her weakneſs, and, after a long and painful altercation, ſhe would have found herſelf in a worſe ſituation, not advanced one ſtep towards a victory: convinced of this, ſhe determined to attempt no conqueſt, but by the gentleſt methods, and, if thoſe failed, ſhe would have nothing to reproach herſelf with, and muſt be content to mourn in ſilence her want of influence.

The neighbourhood of Farnham Abby afforded a genteel and pleaſant ſociety, and Helena's politeneſs would have induced her to return, as they deſerved, the attentive civilities of the ſurrounding families; but, to country neighbours, lord Farnham was ever diſtant and ſupercilious, and he now wiſhed to baniſh all viſitors; the party at home was ſociety enough for him, nor did he like the idea of having his houſe full of company, who would engage the attention and uſurp the converſation of Helena, which he conſidered as an infringement of his rights. He could not, however, prevent her receiving and returning viſits; and, though mortified and out of humor, whenever they were to go out, or have company at home, he was, in ſome meaſure, obliged to ſubmit. Amongſt the families, to whom Helena would have choſen to pay the greateſt reſpect, was Sir Charles Fitzoſborn's; he was the particular friend of lord Huntley, but for this reaſon, ſhe was fearful of expreſſing any partiality to them, though both Sir Charles and lady Fitzoſborn were ſenſible, pleaſant people. She was much hurt at being obliged to receive them only in form, with the reſt of her neighbours,

but

but the internal peace of her own family was to be preferred to every other conſideration, and it was as much her intereſt as her duty, to preſerve herſelf from the effects of thoſe violent guſts of paſſion lord Farnham was too ſubject to.

CHAP. XLIV.

ONE morning, as Sir James was reading to the ladies who were at work, and lord Farnham was lounging on a ſopha, Sir Charles and lady Fitz-oſborn were announced; the book and work were of courſe thrown aſide; and a lively converſation enſued: when they roſe to take leave, Sir Charles, who had been lord Huntley's confidant, had carefully avoided all mention of his name, from a fear of raiſing diſagreeable reflections in the mind of Helena; but, as he was making his bow, he ſaid, in a low key, "I was at Barnhurſt Caſtle a few days ſince, where I had the pleaſure of finding our friends well, but they lamented with one accord, the deprivation of your ſociety; and your young friend, mademoiſelle St. Clare, complains much of her abſence from her dear lady Farnham." Helena could not ſuppreſs a ſigh as ſhe replied, "I hope it will not be long before I ſhall ſee them; I think it an age ſince we parted; and lord Charles writes me word that he intends quitting England in a few weeks, ſo that I ſhall have but little of his company for ſome time to come." Sir Charles ſaid, his lord-

ſhip

ſhip had mentioned his intended tour; he then followed his lady. Lord Farnham threw himſelf on the ſopha again, and preſerved a ſullen ſilence, till Helena, unconſcious of it, heaved a deep ſigh. "What," ſaid he, "has your converſation with Sir Charles Fitzoſborn renewed unpleaſant ideas? Was he ſo kind to inform you of his friends miſery?" "No indeed," replied Helena, "he mentioned only our friends at Barnhurſt Caſtle, and ſaid they were well, and wiſhed to ſee us;" "If that was all he had to communicate," anſwered lord Farnham, was there any occaſion for the ſpeaking in a lower voice, and addreſſing it wholly to you?" "You diſtreſs both yourſelf and me, my lord," ſaid Helena; "can you believe me guilty of a falſhood?" "I do not know what to believe," replied he; "nothing but a mad man would have hazarded his happineſs on the feeble foundation I have done, and I deſerve to be puniſhed for my egregious d——n'd folly." Helena perceived that the demon of diſcord had ſeized him, ſo it was in vain to hope he would attend to reaſon, ſhe was therefore ſilent. Sir James, in order to divert the ſtorm, continued to read, when a moſt unfortunate accident occaſioned its revival, to an almoſt fatal degree: Helena had taken out her pocket-book, to read a few lines inſerted in it, which were applicable to the ſubject of the book they were peruſing; when, in turning over ſome looſe papers, a likeneſs of lord Huntley, drawn and coloured by herſelf in happier days, fell to the floor; it inſtantly caught the penetrating eye of lord Farnham, who darted from his ſeat to take it up. Helena was confuſed at his manner of gazing on the picture, then on her,

and

and her cheek betrayed the marks of a guilt her ſoul was a ſtranger to; at length, almoſt choaked with rage, he gave voice to the paſſion which agitated his whole frame, and, ſeizing the arm of the trembling Helena, whoſe fainting ſenſes were recalled by the rudeneſs of his anger; he exclaimed, "Where is your boaſted virtue? your angelic purity! Is it to dwell on the flattering likeneſs of your own creating? Is it wantonly to gaze on the features of a man, whom both God and man forbid you to harbour a paſſion for, and am I to be made the dupe of an artful family? Is my honor to be ſacrificed to preſerve theirs? but I might have ſeen through the affected generoſity of ſentiment, the ſpecious virtue which has deſtroyed my peace, if I had not been a blind fool: but believe not, Helena," continued he, with a ſtern aſpect, "believe not, that I will ſubmit tamely to injuries like theſe; Huntley ſhall not triumph in my diſgrace, for never ſhall your longing eyes behold him more, unleſs, to gratify my revenge, I drag you forth to witneſs his laſt agonies; to ſee him ſtruggling in all the anguiſh of a death my juſt vengeance has inflicted on him; it would pleaſe me to hear his laſt groan, which ſhall convey the poignant agony of deſpair to your guilty ſoul, and give a pleaſing terror to the mind of an injured huſband. I reſign myſelf to miſery, but I will have a companion; yes, I will ſit and behold every beauty wither from a cheek, which, I vainly thought, was painted with the glow of innocence; I will watch the laſt ray of ſoul languiſh in your eye, till worn out with complicated ſorrows, the ſpirit, which animated a form once lovely and beloved, ſhall leave it pale and breath-

leſs; then curſe myſelf and all the world." "My God!" cryed lady Frances, "can you perſiſt in an outrage ſo inhuman? Are you become ſo ſavage, that you can behold the moſt innocent and moſt lovely of women deprived of her ſenſes, by your deſpicable jealouſy; and your horrid threats." "My lord," ſaid Sir James, "do you not ſee lady Farnham in a ſituation ſo truly deplorable? and can you reſolve to complete your own wretchedneſs by her death?" "Why ſhould ſhe live," replied he, "to be a burden to herſelf, and a curſe to me?" "You need not fear, my lord," ſaid Maria, whoſe temper rouſed, to ſee her friend treated like a guilty wretch; "the gentle ſpirit is unequal to ſuch inſults and injuries; ſhe will never live to bear ſuch another inſult. Oh mercy! that ſuch perfection ſhould meet a fate ſo terrible; never, never again, will ſhe open her eyes." "She ſhall not die!" exclaimed lord Farnham. "Look up then, my beloved Helena, look up once more." The big tear rolled down his face, as he claſped the lovely, lifeleſs form of his Helena to his boſom. Fury had given way to an alarming anxiety for her ſafety; and he now called upon her to forgive and pity him. "Oh Maria!" ſaid he, turning to Miſs Weſtmorland, who ſtood weeping by her over her friend; "Help me to reſtore to life this much injured woman. What a villain have I been to deſtroy her!" Sir James, who obſerved, that, while they all lamented, they took no pains to recover Helena went in ſearch of her woman, whom he ordered to bring every thing which could contribute to her reſtoration, and he ſent directly for a phyſician. Helena was conveyed to her own room,

room, and laid on the bed; ſhe ſtill continued inſenſible. Lady Frances, overwhelmed with grief, attended her, along with Maria, while Sir James was ſufficiently employed in endeavouring to calm the tranſports of ſorrow which had ſeized the unhappy huſband of this innocent victim of rage and misfortune. She came at laſt to herſelf, and gently ſighing, ſaid, "This is a cruel kindneſs; why, my friends, would you not let me die in peace? Have I not lived too long? Have I I not been charged with every crime which can defame humanity? Oh my good God! thou, who knoweſt my innocence, hear my prayers, and releaſe me from this world of ſorrow." "Live, my angelic ſiſter!" cried lady Frances, "oh! live to receive the contrition of the moſt ungrateful, but now the moſt miſerable of men; you, who, like heaven, can forgive and pity, think of his agonies, if your death ſhould follow an outrage ſo deteſtable." "Oh lady Frances!" ſaid the feeble Helena, "can your brother think me guilty of the offences he has charged me with; and if not, is he not cruel to ſport with feelings that muſt end me; but heaven is my witneſs, whether I live or die, I forgive him; and, if it had been in my power, I would have contributed to his happineſs, but he would not allow me. I conjure you, let my laſt moments be undiſturbed; ſuffer me to quit the world in peace." Maria wept, but could not ſpeak; and the phyſician, arriving juſt then, gave poſitive orders that no one ſhould talk to lady Farnham, and, that her room ſhould be kept quite quiet; he did not apprehend any immediate danger, but dreaded a hurry of ſpirits as fatal to his patient.

Lord

Lord Farnham was informed, if he expected her recovery, he must not attempt to see her; and a messenger was dispatched to Barnhurst Castle, to let the family know of her illness; while every one, but the necessary attendants, was banished from Helena's apartment. The indifference of the man of fashion was lost in the poignant feelings of a perturbed spirit, strong feelings, and unavailing repentance. Lord Farnham traversed the room in wild disorder, or sat like the gloomy figure of despondency, awakened only from his reverie by the most tormenting reflections.

CHAP. XLV.

THE passion of anger has always been, and must ever be disgusting in its appearance, as destructive in its effects; and though it is too often the inmate of a bosom, whose intimate communication with the seat of sense and reason, should correct its violence; though persons of the soundest understanding too frequently allow themselves to be overpowered by its influence; yet it certainly can never be considered as a proof of superior sense, and must ever be regarded as a blemish otherwise, in the most exalted character; can those victims of its turbulent and excessive rage imagine, that a few soft words are a sufficient compensation for the language of invective, accompanied by a storm the most terrifying, and full

ſull of deformity? can they ſuppoſe that, having laviſhed on the object of their fury, a torrent of inſult which wounds the feeling and ſaddens the heart, that when they chuſe to reſume their reaſon, all ſhall be well again? No, the ſenſibility, which ſuffers from its pernicious conſequences, will create a contempt for that perſon from whom the injury proceeds; and if duty and affection ſhall preſerve them from that ſentiment, they muſt ſtill be an object of terror. There can be no doubt, but that too many juſtifiable occaſions will preſent themſelves, to diſplay anger upon, but it ſhould be tempered with humanity, and corrected by reaſon, or how diſtinguiſh between the human race and the brute creation? and that monſtrous and erroneous idea, that exceſſive and dangerous folly, of attributing paſſion to the warm effuſions of a generous temper, has moſt certainly encouraged many to indulge it till it becomes a momentary madneſs, which diſorders the body, and renders the mind a ſcene of anarchy. Such was the ſituation in which this deſtructive fury left Lord Farnham, and to a ſtate of the moſt languid weakneſs, its effects had reduced the gentle Helena.

The family from Barnhurſt Caſtle, alarmed at an account which, though it ſpoke in the gentleſt terms of the illneſs of their beloved Helena, yet deſired their immediate preſence, haſtened therefore, to ſet out for Farnham Abbey without a moment's delay. When lord Farnham was informed of their arrival, he deſired Sir James, his ſiſter and Maria to receive them, not chuſing himſelf to encounter with a family he had ſo materially injured, in the perſon of a beloved child;

" beſides," ſaid he, to Sir James, " I am not inclined to parly with that young coxcomb, lord Charles, who will, I ſuppoſe fancy himſelf authoriſed to reſent my behaviour, which, though I confeſs very culpable, yet I will not ſubmit to be called to an account for by him." Sir James, though he was much irritated, by a conduct ſo contrary to reaſon, and the tenderneſs lord Farnham ever expreſſed for Helena, yet reſolved to ſoften it to the duke and dutcheſs as much as poſſible. He attended them the moment of their arrival, and explained the circumſtance as little to the diſcredit of his brother as the cauſe would admit. The duke was much afflicted, the dutcheſs ſighed heavily, Laura wept aloud, and lord Charles exclaimed, " You, Sir! I am ſure, will not juſtify a conduct which has occaſioned ſuch alarming conſequences; but it is what I feared; 'twas a connection which never met my approbation, as it was ever unlikely to ſecure the happineſs of a beloved ſiſter; what amends can lord Farnham make her family for the outrage he has been guilty of to the moſt amiable of women?" " 'Tis now too late, my lord," replied Sir James, " to prevent the evil, it alone remains for us to alleviate it as much as poſſible. I by no means juſtify lord Farnham's rage; but, you may believe me, he is ſeverely puniſhed, in the torments he at this inſtant undergoes." " He deſerves to feel," anſwered lord Charles, " and, from my ſoul, I hope he may experience all the pain his brutality merits." Sir James gravely ſaid, " there was little doubt, but the wiſh would be accompliſhed, but," continued he, " your lordſhip muſt allow me to obſerve, that it is not very generous to load a man with

with opprobrium who is already ſubdued; and you may be aſſured, that lady Farnham wants no ſupport that her friends here can give her; we are all fully ſenſible of her exalted virtues." "Forgive me, Sir," replied lord Charles, "I was betrayed into a warmth, of expreſſion for which I intreat your pardon. I am convinced my unhappy ſiſter has experienced your regard." A meſſenger then arrived from Helena's apartment, who brought word that ſhe grew worſe, and that ſhe was unable to ſee any body; they were therefore obliged to content themſelves with ſending every half hour to enquire after her. The evening moved heavily on, and the night was paſſed in the moſt anxious ſtate of fear and ſuſpenſe by the whole party. Lord Farnham threw himſelf on the ſopha in Helena's dreſſing-room, and no intreaties could move him thence; Sir James ſtaid with him, while lady Frances, Laura and Maria, ſat up in the room adjoining the one where the object of all their care lay. Her ſenſes bewildered, and her danger increaſing every hour. In the morning her fever was ſtill high, and her head quite gone; ſhe called on lord Huntley to ſave her; ſhe ſcreamed for help, and caught hold of her woman, who ſat weeping by her bed-ſide. Nothing could exceed the confuſion and grief of the whole family, during that and ſeveral days. After one of the violent paroxyſms of her diſorder, when ſhe had fallen into a ſtupor, the dutcheſs begged to take a laſt look at her dear child; accompanied by the three weeping friends, ſhe entered the room, and beheld her ſtretched in a lifeleſs poſture, pale, livid, and emaciated; her eyes cloſed, and little leſs than dead to all appearance.

The

The dutcheſs, overcome by a ſight ſo dreadful, was ſilent for ſome minutes, then, kneeling down by her, exclaimed ſoftly, "Father of mercies! if it is thy almighty will to remove her from the unmerited evils of life, may it alſo pleaſe to endue us with fortitude to ſupport the blow; and as thou waft her ſpotleſs ſoul to heaven, pour upon us a portion of reſignation equal to the loſs." Lord Charles had followed them, and ſtood gazing in mute ſorrow, upon the once beauteous form of the lovely, animated Helena. Laura had thrown her arms round Maria's neck, to hide her tears, while that faithful friend was ſcarcely able to ſupport herſelf. Helena moved a little, and a fear of deſtroying her entirely, if ſhe ſhould come to herſelf, haſtened their departure. They looked on her, every one eager to behold her, as they thought, for the laſt time. She recovered herſelf for a moment; they gave her her medicine, and ſhe ſunk into a profound ſlumber, which laſted many hours. Lord Fanham's own man imprudently told his lord, that the dutcheſs had been in his lady's apartment, accompanied by moſt of her friends; "And am I," ſaid his lordſhip, "to be the only one deprived of the melancholy pleaſure of contemplating the heavenly, though alas! now inanimate, charms of my own Helena; go," continued he, "and tell lady Frances, I muſt be admitted immediately." The ſervant went as he was ordered, and lady Frances believing he might ſee her without any danger, returned him an anſwer, "that ſhe was ready to attend him on the mournful viſit." Slowly he approached the door, trembling and violently agitated; his ſiſter met him, and conducted him to the bed-ſide of the

ſtill

ſtill ſleeping Helena. "Great God!" cried he in an agony, "what a ſight do I behold!" It is not to be endured; and, ſinking down, he covered his face, to conceal the emotions which ſhook his whole form; then, raiſing it, he exclaimed, "Has the angelic ſpirit of my Helena, for ever left its manſion! and am I indeed doomed to be a wretch for ever!" Helena ſighed, as if to anſwer his ſorrowful addreſs, and the following words broke from her in a low and plaintive voice: "Ye pure and peaceful ſpirits, where are ye fled? will ye not conduct me to the regions of bliſs? Oh! come ye miniſters of heaven, and bear me from a world where I have only taſted the bittereſt ſorrows; but ere ye go, pour the balm of comfort into the boſoms of my dear friends; and preſerve lord Farnham from remorſe and grief; lead his mind to virtue, and let him be happy." Affected even to agony, by this pious prayer, for one who deſerved it not, lord Farnham would have diſturbed the only half ſenſible Helena, if lady Frances had not forced him out of the room. The phyſician again reiterated his order for profound quiet, and declared that all his hopes now depended on the placid and patient diſpoſition of lady Farnham.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLVI.

SEVERAL days elapſed in a ſtate of fearful uncertainty, whether Helena would or would not recover; at length ſhe was pronounced out of of danger; ſhe was ſtill weak and low, though relieved from diſorder, and it was ſome time before ſhe was allowed to ſee lord Farnham. Her friends ſeparately ſpent moſt of the day with her. She was impatient to convince the author of her illneſs, that ſhe was incapable of harbouring reſentment, therefore, as ſoon as poſſible, deſired to have an interview with him. A conſcious ſhame overſpread his face as he approached her, and, preſſing her to his boſom, he, with much agitation, intreated her forgiveneſs; ſhe chearfully accorded it him, with a grace which enhanced the value of the reconciliation; ſhe ſweetly lamented the alteration which appeared in his countenance, and expreſſed a hope, that their future lives might be free from any tumulutous ſorrows; he faithfully promiſed to cheriſh, not deſtroy, the virtues heaven had beſtowed on him. Thus once more reſtored to tranquillity, Helena's friends ſaw a daily amendment in her looks, and flattered themſelves ſhe was ſtill reſerved for years of undiſturbed enjoyment. Lord Charles, who had fixed the time of his departure, prior to the illneſs of his ſiſter, now took an affectionate leave of her; commended his little ward, Laura, to the care and attention of his mother; and, charged with many letters and meſſages to lord Huntley,

and

and the count de St. Clare, bade adieu to England, to join thoſe friends at Paris, where they were waiting his arrival. The reſt of the party remained a few weeks together at Farnham Abbey; then, in compliance with the deſire of her friends, Helena agreed to accept, with lord Farnham, an invitation he had received from the count de Granville. The mild climate of France was recommended to her, and ſhe parted reluctantly from her family and friends; ſhe conſented that a day ſhould be fixed for their ſetting out. The dutcheſs intreated Maria to accompany them to Barnhurſt Caſtle, and, after a thouſand affectionate adieus, ſeparated; the duke and dutcheſs, Laura and Maria return back to the Caſtle; lord and lady Farnham ſet forward into France, through which country they propoſed travelling, by eaſy ſtages, to the Chateau de Granville, which was ſeveral days journey beyond Paris, at which place they arrived without any material occurrence. Helena was grieved that ſhe could not ſee Caroline Danby; but it was impoſſible, without acquainting lord Farnham, which would have been highly improper. They only ſtaid in Paris to recover the fatigue of travelling, meaning to return that way home, at a ſeaſon when it would be in all its ſplendour. They had not reached the next ſtage where they intended to ſleep, when Helena was ſeized with a fainting ſickneſs, which obliged them to ſtop at a ſmall poſt-houſe on the road; here lady Farnham was conducted to the beſt apartment the houſe afforded, in order to try if reſt would relieve her; in a few minutes a moſt violent noiſe was heard below ſtairs, ſo deſtructive to repoſe, that lord Farnham went down in order

to

to prevent its continuance: as he deſcended he heard a man, whoſe accent proclaimed his country to be England, ſay with much rage, "You paltry coxcomb, do you think I have croſſed the Atlantic, and faced a brave enemy, to ſuffer any man living to inſult my wife? no, I will defend her with my laſt drop of blood, for ſhe is as honeſt a girl as any in the three kingdoms." Lord Farnham could not help ſmiling at the expreſſion of the ſoldier, who had croſſed the Atlantic, traverſed great part of America, and was then in France; he ſeemed to confine, and it was moſt likely he did, every degree of honor, honeſty, and perfection to the Britiſh dominions: in him this natural prejudice was moſt probably the offspring of an honeſt heart; an attachment the moſt uſeful and praiſe-worthy, in the lower ranks of people, though highly illiberal in the minds which education ſhould enlarge. He entered into the room, where he diſcovered the enraged party, and a pretty, little, clean-looking woman, trembling and terrified, ſtanding by the ſoldier, on whoſe countenance the marks of indignation were viſible; the other was one of his own footmen.

CHAP. XLVII.

ON his entrance all was ſilent, and he demanded the cauſe of the uproar which had diſturbed lady Farnham. "Pleaſe your honor," ſaid

ſaid the ſoldier, "this fellow here attempted to inſult my wife, and, becauſe I would not ſubmit to it, he called us both names, which no man can bear; I beg pardon, if I have diſturbed the lady, but a man cannot ſtand by and ſee his wife ill-uſed." "You are perfectly right, my honeſt friend," ſaid his lordſhip, "and the raſcal who dared to offend an honeſt woman, ſhall either beg her pardon or quit my ſervice." "Your honor is very good," returned the ſoldier, "though we are poor we are honeſt my lord, I aſſure you." The ſervant, on whom his lord beſtowed a very ſevere reprimand, choſe rather to aſk pardon of the ſoldier and his wife, than quit his place, and thus the diſpute ended. Lord Farnham then turning to the ſoldier ſaid, "Friend, what brings you into France? I ſee you ſtill wear the uniform of the Engliſh army, you cannot therefore have quitted it for that of this country. A bluſh paſſed acroſs the cheek of the Britiſh ſoldier, at the idea of a bare poſſibility that he could deſert his colours, or fight againſt the country which was ſo dear to him. "No, pleaſe your honor," replied he, "I would die before I would fight againſt old England; but if your honor is pleaſed to hear what brought me into France, I will inform you;" "Pray do," ſaid lord Farnham.

"In one of our engagements in America, the regiment in which I ſerved, was ſtationed at the outſkirts of the line; towards the cloſe of the action, I ſaw a French officer, who had fought bravely, fall, covered with blood: pleaſe your honor, though he was a Frenchman, yet I could not help feeling compaſſion for his ſituation; and, ſeeing that he muſt be trampled to death if ſomebody

body did not bear him off the field, I raiſed him up and ſupported him in my arms, till ſome of his men, having miſſed him, came in ſearch of him; to them I delivered him, fainting with pain and loſs of blood, and I learned that it was count de P. an officer of diſtinction in the French ſervice. We returned to our camp, and I thought no more of the count de P——; when ſome time after, we were ordered out upon a very deſperate action, where I had the misfortune, with many others, to be wounded and taken priſoner; when my wounds were pretty well healed, I was one day walking out, juſt before the priſon, when I ſaw the count de P——; he looked attentively at me, and then aſked if I was not the ſoldier who had ſaved him from being trampled to death? I ſaid I had raiſed him up: the count ordered me to follow him to his tent; I obeyed, and, when we reached it, he ſaid that he owed his life to me, and bid me name what ſervice he could do me in return. I ſaid I required none, his honor was welcome to whatever I could do towards his ſafety, which was not much. "I am going," replied he, "into France, and, as your ſituation here cannot be convenient, I will take you along with me, and from thence you ſhall, if you pleaſe, return to England;" "Your honor knows I was not allowed to join our army again; and indeed my wounds had left me weak and unable to move far on foot, ſo that this propoſal of the count's ſuited me very well; I thanked him as well as I was able, and agreed to attend him home. We embarked on board a ſhip bound for France, and when we arrived in this country, the count went to Paris, and ordered one of his ſervants to conduct

me

me to his ſeat in the country, where I was to wait his coming; here my lord, I recovered perfectly of my wounds, and by the time the count got home, I was ſo well that I reſolved to beg his leave to return to my native country; when I mentioned it to him, he ſaid I was at liberty to do as I liked beſt; but, if I would ſtay in France, he would provide for me. I told him, pleaſe your honor, that I had relations, and above all, a wife in England, for which reaſon I wiſhed to go home; ſend for your wife, ſaid he, and you ſhall live in a habitation of your own, under my protection. The count's kindneſs was ſo great that I was fain to comply, ſo wrote a letter to Fanny, deſiring her to come to me: the count alſo wrote to ſome gentleman in England to get my diſcharge from my regiment, which he obtained. Fanny ſet out on receiving my letter, and came by long ſea to Dunkirk, where I met her, and we reached together the village round which the count's eſtate lay, and when he had given me a comfortable houſe and a garden, with money to live upon, here we lived for three years, very happy, except that now and then we could not help regretting our friends in England; but the count's goodneſs to us was ſo great that we could not complain. About two months ſince, unhappily for all his dependants, the count was taken ill, and not a fortnight ago I followed him to the grave. During his illneſs he called for me, and ſaid that I had been the means of his returning to France to die amongſt his family and friends, and that, as he believed he was then near his end, he would take care to give me a ſum to make me feel this loſs as little as poſſible; he gave me this

note

note, an pleaſe your honor; it was a draft for five hundred pounds Engliſh, on an eminent broker at Paris." The ſoldier dropped a tear on the paper as he put it up again. "The count died," continued he, as he wiped his eyes with the ſleeve of his coat, "and we loſt our friend, and with him, the reaſon that kept us from England. I ſtaid, your honor, to pay the debt of gratitude to the count's body, and, as ſoon as it was buried, my wife and I returned our thanks to the marchioneſs of R——, the count's only daughter, who was married to the marquis; they would have had us remain where we were, but I felt too ſtrong a wiſh to ſee old England once more: ſhe inſiſted, however, that we ſhould leave our little girl behind us: unwillingly we complied; but, as my lady promiſed to bring her up with her own children, we could not reſolve to take her away, and this may, one day, be a cauſe for my taking another journey into France. I muſt beg your honor's pardon for troubling you ſo long, and we hope you will pleaſe to accept our humble thanks for your honor's kindneſs."

Lord Farnham had liſtened with complacency to the ſoldier's tale, which, though it contained no material incidents, was accompanied by a manner at once modeſt and feeling. "So, friend," ſaid his lordſhip, "though you have been ſo long in France, you have not forgot old England; you will not cry, vive le roi, to the French King." "Pleaſe your honor, I wiſh the French King no ill, but I would ſooner ſay, God bleſs our own King." "Here friend," ſaid lord Farnham, "that you may not break into your five hundred pounds, here is ſomething to pay your expences on the road;

road; I wiſh you a good journey, and ſafe in England." The ſoldier bowed, his wife bluſhed, and curtſied; "Heaven bleſs your honor, and may your lady ſoon be well." Lord Farnham thanked her, and returned to enquire after his Helena, who, after a ſhort and diſturbed ſleep, had awakened feveriſh, and unable to proceed further that day at leaſt. Lord Farnham was much diſtreſſed, as the accommodations were ſo very bad where they were; he went to the woman of the houſe, to enquire if there was no better apartment to be procured in the village? She replied, "that ſhe believed ſhe could get the lady one at Monſieur Derville's, if my lord Anglois thought proper." "By all means," ſaid he, "any where leſs noiſy than this houſe." Away flew the woman, and in a few minutes brought word, that madame Derville would moſt willingly accommodate the Engliſh lady, and that monſieur himſelf, was coming after her; ſhe had ſcarcely ſpoke ere a tall genteel young man approached. "This is my lord Anglois," ſaid the woman to him; he bowed, and ſaid, "his mother had ſent him to offer a lady, whom he underſtood was ſick, an apartment in their houſe." Lord Farnham was ſurpriſed at the appearance of the ſtranger, having ſuppoſed it was ſome bourgeoiſe of the innkeeper's acquaintance; he apologized for the liberty he had been led into; but ſaid, "If it was no inconvenience, lady Farnham ſhould accept madame Derville's obliging and humane offer." The youth, again bowing, ſaid, "It would make them moſt happy to contribute to the lady's eaſe." Lord Farnham then intreated monſieur to walk

in, while he informed lady Farnham of a change ſo much in her favor; he complied.

CHAP. XLVIII.

HELENA was ſomewhat ſhocked at the idea of forcing herſelf on the benevolence of the ſtrangers; but lord Farnham was ſo urgent with her to accept the offer, that ſhe reſolved to do ſo; he then returned to the room where ſhe had left monſieur Derville, and gave orders that the carriage ſhould be got ready to convey lady Farnham to her new lodgings. In a ſhort time Helena was introduced to her obliging hoſt, whoſe politeneſs relieved her apprehenſions of being an intruder into his family. They all three got into the carriage, which ſoon ſet them down at the door of a large old houſe, into which their guide conducted them. In an apartment, whoſe furniture ſpoke a decay of riches, a woman of about ſixty, waited to receive them. Her figure was graceful, her aſpect benign, and the traces of beauty were to be ſeen in her features. She accoſted them in Engliſh, and expreſſed much ſatisfaction in having the favor of accommodating them: to this obliging attention, both lord and lady Farnham returned their warmeſt thanks. After a ſhort converſation, Helena retired to the room provided for her, and lord Farnham continued with monſieur Derville, whom he found an intelligent young man,

man, poſſeſſed of all that urbanity for which the French are diſtinguiſhable; but, for a native of that country, he was remarkably grave. In the midſt of their diſcourſe, the door opened, and in came a female figure, whoſe native charms were heightened by a fanciful mode of dreſs; her gown was white, adorned with natural flowers; her flaxen hair hung down her back, and curled round the ſweeteſt melancholy face in the world; a ſmall ſtraw hat, covered alſo with roſes, was on her head; and ſhe entered, warbling a ſoft melodious note. When ſhe beheld lord Farnham, who had riſen to receive her, ſhe ceaſed ſinging, and ſilently advanced into the room, ſeating herſelf oppoſite to him, without ſeeming to regard him; ſhe reclined her head on one hand, which reſted on the table, while with the other ſhe took a picture from her boſom, on which ſhe gazed for ſome minutes, then preſſed to her lips, ſighed and replaced it, and walked out of the room, without uttering a word. Monſieur Derville, on her entrance, deſired lord Farnham to keep his ſeat. "My unhappy ſiſter is inſenſible of your lordſhip's attention, a melancholy event has diſturbed her mind." Lord Farnham delicately expreſſed the concern, an object ſo beautiful and ſo reduced, would naturally occaſion; "whatever," ſaid he, "may have been the circumſtance which has entailed ſo dreadful a calamity on your family, all, who, like myſelf, have experienced your benevolent politeneſs, and eager deſire to relieve the diſtreſs of thoſe around you, muſt ſincerely lament the effects of it, on the intellects of one, who appears intended by nature to adorn ſociety." The brother of the poor wandering Louiſa bow-

ed, and replied, "That the cataſtrophe which had involved his family in misfortunes, which he feared were never to be alleviated, was, he hoped, ſingular; but that he would not treſpaſs on his lordſhip's patience, by recounting a tale full of ſorrow." Lord Farnham anſwered, "That he would by no means, requeſt a favor which might renew unpleaſant ſcenes, otherwiſe, he ſhould conſider himſelf obliged, by a confidence, which, while it left him unable to remove the evils it related, would make him a partaker of them." "Our misfortunes, my lord," replied the youth, "are too well known, for me to apprehend any thing but pity, from a communication of them; but if they were not, the intereſt you ſo obligingly ſeem to take, would induce me to give you a relation, which can only create a mournful ſympathy in a ſoul like yours." The diſordered ſenſes of the wretched Louiſa, is only a part of the ſorrows the miſerable family of Derville are ordained to ſuffer, and I, though no actor, muſt ever be a partaker of them.

CHAP. XLIX.

LORD Farnham was attentive, and monſieur Derville proceeded: "About a year ago I returned from the academy where I received my education, accompanied by a friend and fellow-ſtudent;

ſtudent; Louiſa, my only ſiſter, had juſt before left the convent; ſhe was ſeventeen; of an engaging diſpoſition; adorned with all that naivete the pure effects of innocence, ſuch as ſhe then was. Auguſtus d'Alberty, whoſe outward form was not leſs captivating, than the graces which dwelt in his ſoul, ſaw and loved her. I thought they were born for each other; vain thought! for the raſhneſs of an hour deſtroyed the too flattering illuſion. They had not been long together ere a mutual attachment animated them; happineſs ſeemed to be their own; peace to ſmile around them; when our elder brother, Edward Derville, who was with his regiment when we arrived, got leave to viſit his family; he came, and from that day joy no longer gladdened all the ſcene; ever impetuous, he had ſuffered little contradiction, being too much favored by our mother, who too fatally feels the effects of indulging all his follies. The affair of our ſiſter's marriage, which had only been ſettled a few days before he came, had not been mentioned to him; but there appeared no objection to an union ſo likely to procure her felicity, and to ſecure it: When my mother told him of the intended match, he coldly ſaid, "He diſapproved of it, and had higher expectations for Louiſa." My mother replied, "That it was too late, and beſides Louiſa's peace depended on her marriage with Auguſtus." He ſwore ſhe ſhould never be united to him. My mother was peremptory in declaring it ſhould take place, and I ſupported her: he gave way to all the fury of his temper, which abſorbed every better quality; and with a dreadful threat, which he too well performed, he left us. Some hours after, as my mother,

mother, Louiſa, Auguſtus and myſelf, were converſing together, Edward abruptly entered. Auguſtus, who was ſpeaking to me, advanced ſome opinion which Edward directly contradicted in the moſt ungentleman-like manner. Auguſtus endeavoured to wave the ſubject; but our unhappy brother, determining to quarrel with him, perſiſted in the moſt inſulting language to addreſs him; at length the other warmed, and demanded his reaſon for ſuch behaviour? Edward replied. "That he was a cold phlegmatic puppy, or he would have demanded his reaſons in another way." Auguſtus was rouſed, and required his preſence in another room. Louiſa, terrified even to agony, dropped at the feet of her unnatural brother, and in accents of the moſt moving ſorrow, beſought him not to render her a wretch for ever: but, deaf to her intreaties, he broke from her, and ruſhed out of the room. My mother ſupported her fainting child, over whom ſhe wept; while I ſeized hold of my friend's arm, to prevent his following Edward, but in vain. He turned towards me, and calmly ſaid, "Henry, I have, for my poor Louiſa's ſake, and for your's, endured as much as man could; but not even the brother of her whom I adore, ſhall, with impunity, offer me an inſult: my fame is as yet unblemiſhed, and I muſt take care it continues ſo; ſtay," continued he, "and endeavour to comfort Louiſa and your good mother." Saying this, he forced himſelf from me, and joined Edward, who was waiting for him. They fought, for nothing could recall the reaſon of my brother: by the time I reached the place, Auguſtus had received a wound in his breaſt; which was the cauſe of his death:

I ſupported

I ſupported him in my arms as he was falling. The horrors of the deed at once ruſhed on the mind of his murderer; and, with the bloody weapon in his hand, he ran into the room to my mother, and Louiſa, who was juſt recovering from her fainting fit. "Now," cried he, in a voice of diſtraction, "now curſe your unhappy, wretched ſon! for this ſword has pierced the heart of Auguſtus." Louiſa uttered a loud ſcream, and again died away in her mother's embrace. He approached her, and ſaid, "Poor miſerable maid! I have killed thee too! but fare thee well; never more ſhall thy eyes behold the murderer of thy lover; and you, madam," ſaid he to his mother, whoſe faculties were ſuſpended with grief and horror, "if poſſible, forget that ſuch a monſter deforms the face of the earth."

CHAP. L.

WHILE this ſcene was acting within the houſe, my dying friend, whoſe head reſted on my boſom, charged me "to be careful of the poor Louiſa; to tell her, ſhe was dearer to him than life; and, that he too late repented, that the words of a madman had exaſperated him ſo far: tell her too," continued he, "death alone, can ſteal her loved image from my mind, and that my laſt words, intreat heaven to bleſs and to ſupport her; and, my dear friend, let my poor mother

ther be informed of the death of her ſon, gently; be it your buſineſs to ſoften, as much as poſſible, the tidings, which will, I fear, overwhelm her; and to you I commit the charge of ſeeing, that, when childleſs, her old age is not neglected: tell your unhappy brother, I forgive and pity him. Farewell," ſaid he, "remember our friendſhip." He graſped my hand in his, and with a ſigh expired. It would be needleſs to ſay how much I was afflicted; thus to be deprived of a much valued friend, by the ſword of a brother; and, to behold the gentle Louiſa, made for ever miſerable. The ſervants, whom the noiſe had brought to us, aſſiſted me to bear the corps of my Auguſtus into the houſe; for the ſcene of his death was at the bottom of the garden. The firſt object I beheld, as we entered the door, was Louiſa, who fell on the body; called aloud on her Auguſtus to anſwer her; and, in ſhort, expreſſed all the violence of grief; when, at length, ſhe was forced away; a raging fever ſeized her, under which ſhe ſtruggled for many days, and at laſt recovered to the ſtate you ſee her. The author of this dire calamity, had, in the confuſion, left the houſe, nor could we learn how, or which way he went. It now remained for me to break the heart-rending news of a beloved, and only ſon's death, to Madame d'Alberty; for which purpoſe I ſet forward to her houſe. But it is not in words to convey the agonies of the diſconſolate mother of Auguſtus; while I, trembling and oppreſſed, ſtood by, without power to alleviate them. She wept; ſhe raved, and fainted! I waited to receive her orders concerning the remains of my friend; and, when ſhe had regained

a ſmall

a ſmall degree of compoſure, ſhe ſent for me, and conjured me to attend the body of Auguſtus to be buried with his father; ſhe lamented with her own, the loſs that poor Louiſa had ſuſtained; and, when I repeated to her the laſt words of her ſon, "You will fulfil the injunction of the dying youth, and let my age find comfort in the friend of my beloved Auguſtus." I ſolemnly vowed to be faithful to the truſt repoſed in me; and ever ſince I have divided my time between Madame d'Alberty, and my own family. On my return home, to perform the laſt ſad office of friendſhip, to the inanimate reſemblance of the man on whom I had repoſed every thought of my heart, I found my mother ſubdued by afflictions; Louiſa for ever, I fear, deprived of her ſenſes: 'tis now nine months ſince this misfortune involved us, and we have never heard a word from, or of, the miſerable Edward. Louiſa ſometimes ſits days and weeks without action or ſpeaking one word; at other times ſhe ſpends moſt of her hours on the ſpot where Auguſtus died; there on a ſmall bed of turf ſhe has planted a willow, which hangs over it; here ſhe ſtrews thoſe flowers ſhe has gathered in the fields or garden; ſometimes ſhe will weep over this little ſpot of earth, and then ſhe is more herſelf: ſhe is always calm, and the villagers never moleſt her, and ſhe rambles continually, unmindful of the ſeaſon whether hot or cold."

Lord Farnham had liſtened attentively, but not unmoved, to the narrative, which, as it wounded his feelings and created his compaſſion, conveyed a uſeful leſſon to a mind like his: a conſcious ſhame filled his boſom, when he thought on the

outrages he himſelf had been guilty of, and the effects of which were ſtill to be ſeen on the pale cheek of the lovely Helena. Monſieur Derville was overcome by a ſad retroſpect of ſuch misfortunes; and both lord Farnham and himſelf were too much occupied with the ſubject, to talk or think of any other till ſupper, which brought Madame Derville to them, obliged them to aſſume an appearance of chearfulneſs; and the evening concluded without any renewal of the melancholy theme.

CHAP. LI.

IN the morning Helena was ſo much refreſhed by a quiet ſlumber, that ſhe felt herſelf much better, and even able to proceed on her journey; but that, Madame Derville would not hear of, and lord Farnham was more inclined to reſt another day, for fear of a return of her complaint. He had communicated the ſad ſtory, which Henry Derville had related to him, to Helena; and prepared her to meet the diſordered Louiſa without ſurpriſe though not without concern. After breakfaſt Helena expreſſed a wiſh to enjoy the air a little; Henry begged to accompany her into the garden, where ſhe would find ſhade as well as air; ſhe, together with lord Farnham, attended him. Louiſa had not yet appeared, till, croſſing the hallowed ſpot, Helena ſaw the beauteous maniac adorning

adorning the ſuppoſed tomb of her Auguſtus with freſh blown roſes. Helena advanced towards her lord Farnham and Monſieur Derville proceeded; as ſhe came up to Louiſa, ſhe ſaw a tear fall on the ſtone, which marked the bounds of the grave. Helena could not help uttering, as ſhe beheld it, "Sweet maid! ever ſacred to thy ſorrows, may thy care-worn breaſt never experience another wound; never may the licentious mirth of the unfeeling ruſtic inflict a pang on a heart almoſt broke with its misfortunes; mayeſt thou ſtrew flowers on the turf, which is conſecrated to the memory of a beloved youth; and ſtill water them with thoſe tears, which, as they flow, will preſerve the full boſom from burſting; and, if time ſhould ever reſtore thy wandering ſenſes, may it, with a lenient hand, mellow thy griefs, and teach thee to ſuſtain, with pious reſignation, the evils that have fallen on thee; then, lovely mourner! peace be with thy gentle ſpirit." Louiſa heard her not; but, taking from her boſom the little companion ſhe moſt valued, ſaid, "Ah! unkind youth, why didſt thou forſake me? Cold is now the boſom of Louiſa; but, my poor head! alas, it aches! Away! away with that bloody figure! Oh, it will kill me! Save me, ſave me!" cried ſhe, and ruſhed into the arms of Helena, who was ſo terrified as to be ſcarcely able to ſupport herſelf, much leſs her agitated companion. Louiſa's cry had brought her brother and lord Farnham back to the place, where they beheld Helena trying to hold the affrighted Louiſa, but pale and trembling herſelf. Henry took hold of her, and gently aſked what had alarmed her? "He came," ſaid ſhe, "with that dreadful ſword,

he

he had plunged into the heart of my Auguſtus, and would have ſtabbed me, but ſomething ſaved me; I think it was an angel, for I never remember to have ſeen it before; ſee, there it is; look how it weeps too." Helena did indeed weep, as lord Farnham led her in; the ſcene had been too much for her ſpirits, and Madame Derville attended her to her apartment. The remainder of the day was ſpent more calmly. Louiſa came into the room to them, having taken a particular fancy to Helena, whom ſhe would ſit by and gaze on, but was quite compoſed. The next morning, having ſaid all that a due ſenſe of the obligation could dictate; lord and lady Farnham took leave of theſe hoſpitable ſtrangers, having promiſed to pay their reſpects to them on their return to England; they alſo obtained a promiſe from Henry, that he would, if poſſible, accompany them into a country which he had a ſtrong deſire to viſit, particularly as his mother was a native of Ireland, and had many relations in that kingdom, and in England: they then, reluctantly, bade adieu to a family from whom they had experienced ſo much politeneſs, and purſued their route to the Chateau de Granville, at which place they were hourly expected. Helena performed the reſt of her journey without illneſs or fatigue; and in the courſe of it was not diſpleaſed to find, that the ſtory of the unfortunate family they had juſt left, had made an impreſſion on the mind of her lord, which, ſhe flattered herſelf foretold a change of ſentiment as well as conduct, to their mutual advantage.

CHAP.

CHAP. LII.

THEY arrived at the count de Granville's ſeat on the ſecond day after quitting; and were received there with all poſſible politeneſs, by the count, and counteſs, mademoiſelle Granville, and Julia, the ſiſter of the counteſs. This family had been taught, from lord Farnham's letters, to expect ſomething more than commonly beautiful in the face and perſon of Helena, whoſe charms, though not in full ſplendor, were ſtill powerful. She was introduced to a handſome woman under thirty, and in the counteſs de Grenville, beheld an engaging female, whoſe manners were unaffected and gentle. Mademoiſelle Grenville was altogether a French woman, highly rouged; dreſſed in the extreme of the reigning faſhion; with fierce black eyes, untempered with the ſmalleſt degree of ſoftneſs; her manners were the reverſe of the counteſs's. Julia was about eighteen; lively, elegant and attractive; gay in her diſpoſition, but gentle in her addreſs. The count was graceful, manly, and his countenance expreſſed a ſtrong underſtanding; his eye was dark and penetrating, and he appeared to poſſeſs all the vivacity and politeneſs of his nation. Such was the family to whom Helena was introduced. Lord Farnham ſeemed perfectly at home, and ſoon fell into a familiar badinage with his old acquaintance, Charlotte de Granville, with whom he had once flirted: ſhe looked not a little pleaſed to renew their intimacy. Helena, engaged in a more ſerious converſation

verſation with the counteſs, who, if ſhe had leſs gaiety, had more ſweetneſs; and lady Farnham retired for the night, poſſeſſed with an high idea of the underſtanding and virtues of the too viſibly neglected wife of the count. Before they left the room in the morning, lord Farnham enquired how Helena liked his friends. "For an acquaintance with the amiable counteſs," replied ſhe, "I am much indebted to you; of the count, I can as yet, be no judge, and I freely confeſs, I do not like his ſiſter at all; Julia appears a very pleaſant girl." "You will give me credit," returned lord Farnham, "another time, when I recommend a friend to you; I am glad you find the counteſs what I repreſented her." "Perfectly ſo," ſaid Helena, "I never doubted your ability, to diſtinguiſh characters; but I lament, that on ſo tranſient a view of the family, I could not help obſerving the little influence the amiable qualities of madame Grenville have on the mind of the count." Lord Farnham, ſmiling, replied, "You, my Helena, can diſcover the misfortunes of others, and pity them; and yet, my love, how little value do we ſet on what we are poſſeſſed of: you have conſidered your huſband's affection as a cauſe of regret; have you not?" "Conſider, my lord," ſaid Helena, "we met under leſs promiſing auſpices than moſt people, but I do not deſpair of beholding that day, on which we may look back without emotion: but you do not tell me your opinion of your old flirt." "O!" replied he "Charlotte is one of thoſe inſignificant beings a man can ſcarcely form an opinion of; ſhe is ridiculous, and contemptible in the extreme; flattery is a never-failing bait to catch her regard, at leaſt

the

appearance of it, for I believe ſhe is as incapable of feeling either love or friendſhip, as ſhe is of inſpiring them." "And yet," ſaid Helena, "you beſtow more attention upon her than on two moſt eſtimable characters; how impoſſible is it for a woman to diſtinguiſh between real and affected eſteem; for, I declare my lord, if mademoiſelle Granville is taken in by your behaviour, I ſhall not wonder." As it was impoſſible for Helena to entertain a particle of jealouſy, with regard to lord Farnham's attentions to any woman, knowing as ſhe did, and oftentimes lamenting it, his violent love for herſelf, and his general opinion of her ſex, ſhe now ſpoke the ſimple dictates of her heart, which, when it felt contempt for any perſon, could never aſſume the appearance of friendſhip. 'Twas this ſentiment of ſincerity, that created her ſurpriſe, that he ſhould chooſe to laviſh his converſation on Charlotte, when, if Julia had been the object of it, her wonder had never exiſted. Lord Farnham laughed at her notions, but he never imagined ſhe was jealous; it would have given him inexpreſſible ſatisfaction to have diſcovered that quality, as he might then have hoped affection accompanied it.

CHAP. LIII.

HELENA found the counteſs ready to receive her, and ſhe found her alſo ſweetly engaged with her moſt lovely children; a girl about four years old had hid her beauteous face in her mother's boſom, while a blooming boy of about ſix, was endeavouring to drag her from her place of refuge. The counteſs would have ſent them away, but Helena begged they might be permitted to remain: a ſcene ſo attractive ſeldom met her eye; ſportive innocence and mutual tenderneſs were here happily delineated. "Laugh on ye ſportive little ones, and never may your innocent pleaſures be ſullied by the tear of diſappointment; or the frowns of ill-judged authority damp your youthful joys; may the fond parent gently pour the leſſons of truth and wiſdom, which, while they expand the ideas, will enlarge every kind and good affection, without robbing ye of that enviable gaiete de coeur, which, as ye journey onward into life, will too quickly forſake ye: let not the happy ſeaſon of your infancy and youth be deprived of their thoughtleſs eaſe, the kind ignorance of coming ills, that frolic mirth, the offspring of peace and innocence: and you, ye anxious parents, while ye call forth the latent ſparks of virtue, and give the poliſh of education to your children, do it with tenderneſs, and your labours ſhall be rewarded by grateful confidence and unaffected love."

The

The reſt of the family ſoon joined the counteſs and Helena. Mademoiſelle Grenville almoſt embraced her dear lady Farnham, while in her heart ſhe would not have been ſorry to ſee her fall dead before her; for vanity, one of the principal ſprings which guided all the movements of her mind, was much mortified to behold her dear Frederick devoted to an inſipid girl: ſhe had early marked lord Farnham for her own, and not a little was her diſappointment, when his marriage was made known to her. The count's attention to Helena was unremitting; but ſhe attributed it to the politeneſs and gallantry of his nation, and conſidered it as no more than an enquiry after her health, made by one of her own countrymen. When breakfaſt was over ſeveral ſchemes were propoſed for the morning; but lord Farnham put an end to them, by ſaying, that both Helena and himſelf muſt employ it in giving their friends in England an account of their arrival. Helena then accompanied the counteſs into her dreſſing-room, where ſhe was furniſhed with materials for writing; a taſk ſhe performed with ſatisfaction, to eaſe the anxious tenderneſs of her friends at Barnhurſt Caſtle; and ſhe could with truth inform them, that her ſituation promiſed to be agreeable, and that both her health and ſpirits were much improved: ſhe put the letters into lord Farnham's hand when finiſhed, a mark of confidence which greatly obliged him. The remainder of the morning was ſpent in converſation and dreſſing for dinner; and every individual in the family ſeemed to conſider themſelves bound to contribute to the eaſe and amuſement of lady Farnham, who, in return, endeavoured to prove,

that

that ſhe was not ungrateful. The count projected ſome new plans of entertainment each day. The ſituation of the chateau afforded the moſt delightful rides and walks, and a beautiful river tempted them frequently to enjoy the harmony of nature on its graſſy ſurface; while ſoft muſic trembled along the ſtream, and echo repeated the melodious ſound. Art and nature were here exhauſted to charm the eye and captivate the fancy. In theſe kinds of elegant amuſement Helena paſſed ſeveral weeks, growing every hour more attached to the counteſs and Julia, more diſguſted with Charlotte, and not better pleaſed with the count.

CHAP. LIV.

ONE morning, as the counteſs and Helena were ſitting together, the reſt of the party being diſperſed, they having purpoſely ſelected themſelves to enjoy the ſociety of each other undiſturbed; the hours glided away in friendly intercourſe, and ſo much were they pleaſed with the peaceful intereſting converſation, that an interruption was regretted by both. A ſervant informed the counteſs, that her preſence was required a few minutes in another room. Helena, when left alone, threw down her work and ſeated herſelf at a piano forte, which was in the apartment, and began to ſing the following lines, of that bard, whoſe harmonious numbers

numbers ſo ſweetly ſpeak the virtues of good temper:

" Euphroſyne! thou guard unſeen!
Whoſe delicate control
Can turn the diſcord of chagrin
To harmony of ſoul!
Above the lyre, the lute above,
Be mine thy melting tone,
Which makes the peace of all we love
The baſis of our own!"

So ſung Helena, not uninſpir'd: the ſprite,
Invok'd ſo fondly in the myſtic rite,
With richeſt muſic ſwell'd her warbling throat,
" And gave new ſweetneſs to her ſweeteſt note."

As the laſt line expired upon her tongue, ſhe was much ſurpriſed, on turning her head, to behold the count ſtanding by her, with his eyes rivetted on her face: he exclaimed, as ſhe ceaſed, " Divine Helena! what heavenly ſounds have bleſſed my ear:" he ſeized her hand, and preſſed it with rapture to his lips. Aſtoniſhed at his familiarity, and confounded at a ſalutation ſo unuſual and unexpected, Helena was a minute before ſhe could recover her voice; ſhe withdrew her hand with an emotion of anger, and replied, " My lord, you forget both yourſelf and me." " Ah charming Helena!" continued he, " can you ſo ſoon forget the influence of that ſoft power you have juſt invoked? I thought I could not find a better time to tell you how much I adore you; that I live but in your ſmiles; that my whole ſoul is yours." " And dare you thus inſult me?" ſaid Helena, whoſe eyes glanced an indignant look at him;

him; "dare you, my lord, forget the ſacred rights of honor, friendſhip, and hoſpitality? Is this your boaſted regard for lord Farnham, to offer his wife the greateſt inſult ſhe could receive? let me paſs, my lord, I will not be detained." The count ſtill prevented her leaving him, and replied, "Can you talk to me of friendſhip and cold maxims? rather, moſt angelic of women! hear me talk of the moſt fervent of all paſſions! Here on my knees! hear me ſwear not to live without you!" Helena, incenſed beyond meaſure at this treatment, with a voice and look expreſſive of the contempt and averſion which animated her whole ſoul, exclaimed, "If you do not leave me this moment, or ſuffer me to quit the room, be aſſured, my lord, every individual in the family ſhall bear witneſs to the indignity you have dared to offer me; your friend, lord Farnham, ſhall know what a viper he has cheriſhed in his boſom: Great God!" continued ſhe, "Did I ever imagine I ſhould be forced to liſten to the licentious freedom of a libertine!" The count, alarmed at her determined manner, ſaid, "I revere your virtue! I adore your purity; and never again, ſhall you have cauſe to complain of inſult from me; only promiſe me, that the involuntary crime I have been guilty of, in wounding your chaſte ears with my paſſion, ſhall remain buried in your own boſom, and for ever will I be ſilent on the ſubject." Helena, though offended beyond meaſure, yet conſidered, that by revealing it to lord Farnham, ſhe ſhould raiſe a flame which would, in all probability, deſtroy them both, replied, "On condition, my lord, that you never addreſs any converſation to me, except in public;

lic; that you never attempt to ſpeak to me alone; and never mention a ſubject which has filled me with horror, I will promiſe that no one ſhall ever be made acquainted with what has paſſed." She then inſtantly left him, reſolving to haſten their departure, if poſſible, from a houſe where ſhe was in danger of meeting freſh indignities; ſhe lamented the unhappy fate of the amiable counteſs, in being united to ſo abandoned a man.

CHAP. LV.

HELENA retired to her own room, to wait lord Farnham's return, and to recollect herſelf after the hurry and confuſion her ſpirits had been thrown into, by ſo mortifying an adventure. That it was out of her power to prevent the intimacy which ſubſiſted between her huſband and the count, without diſcloſing her reaſons, was a cauſe of infinite regret on various accounts; but fear and prudence forbade her breaking her word with the latter, and ſhe was too well acquainted with lord Farnham's temper, to expect his reſentments or reſolutions would be guided by moderation; ſhe knew, that, to communicate to him the inſult ſhe had received, would be to kindle a fire in his breaſt which death only might extinguiſh. While ſhe was ruminating on the awkwardneſs and danger of her ſituation in the Chateau de Grenville, lord Farnham entered the room; the

ſmalleſt

ſmalleſt alteration in her looks or manner, always attracted his attention; obſerving her ſeated in a thoughtful, melancholy poſture, with the traces of a tear on her pale cheek, he eagerly enquired the cauſe of her illneſs or diſtreſs; ſhe pleaded a head-ach, and begged he would make her excuſes to the counteſs, for abſenting herſelf from dinner: ſatisfied with the reaſon aſſigned, he undertook the commiſſion of apologizing for her, and promiſed to ſecure the company of the counteſs for her in the afternoon, if ſhe ſhould ſtill be unable to quit her apartment. On the firſt mention of her indiſpoſition to the party aſſembled at dinner, the counteſs immediately reſolved to viſit her, to inquire if there was any thing which could alleviate her pain, or tempt her to eat. Helena aſſured her a little quiet was the moſt ſovereign remedy for her complaint; and declined all her offers in the eating way. The counteſs then left, her ſaying, ſhe would look in upon her after dinner. On her return to the company, they all eagerly aſked, "What lady Farnham would have ſent her?" The counteſs replied, "That ſhe had not been able to prevail on her friend to accept any thing." "She is worſe, then," ſaid lord Farnham, "than I apprehended: I will ſend inſtantly for your phyſician." "Indeed, my lord," ſaid ſhe, "you need not alarm yourſelf; lady Farnham is certainly not perfectly well, but nothing material is the matter with her, I am ſure, and her not eating, is, with her, no very uncommon circumſtance." Lord Farnham replied, "That ſhe had ſo lately recovered a dangerous illneſs, he could not help being alarmed on her account, and begged they would ſit down without

without him, as he could not be eaſy till he had himſelf ſeen Helena again." To the count, her abſence explained itſelf. Her illneſs he conſidered as an excuſe to avoid him; and was much mortified at ſo ſtriking a mark of her reſentment: he was however neither aſhamed of his conduct, nor, as he had made Helena believe, determined to quit a purſuit which promiſed no ſucceſs. Lord Farnham found her indulging a virtuous regret on his account, as well as on her own. The gleam of chearfulneſs, which had juſt began to reanimate her features, was again loſt in painful reflections. Ever ready to torment himſelf, he imagined, that the dejection he ſaw, was created by her unconquerable diſlike to him; he was ready to believe that his fondeſt hope had vaniſhed, and that Helena never would be reconciled to their union. As he approached her, ſhe endeavoured to aſſume a more chearful aſpect; this created his ſuſpicions; and, with a reproachful tenderneſs, he lamented the fancied occaſion of her ſorrow. "Ah Helena!" ſaid he, ſeeing the tears ſtand in her eyes, "would you perſuade me that a head-ach, that a tranſient indiſpoſition, would reduce you to this ſtate of melancholy? Perhaps you have received letters from England; lord Huntley has, perhaps, written to you; or you have heard of him, and are now weeping over his misfortunes." "O! my lord," ſaid Helena, "why will you torment yourſelf by ſuch unjuſt, ſuch ungenerous ſuſpicions! lord Huntley's name has never, either directly or indirectly, met my ear ſince we left England; I have received no letters but thoſe you have ſeen; but, if I had, had even lord Huntley written to me, is not he my brother? of what

then

then can you be afraid? if you have no confidence in me, be aſſured he is the laſt man on earth likely to injure you in thought, word, or deed; his virtue is fixed on the ſolid baſis of honor and religion; not the ſport of every paſſion; he may be unhappy, but cannot be criminal." "'Tis true, Helena," replied lord Farnham, "I have deſerved your cenſure, and I underſtand your meaning; but can any man endure to ſee the object of his tendereſt affection ever cold, afflicted, and in tears? lord Huntley is happy in meriting your praiſe and approbation; him you eſteem; 'tis the frigid maxim of duty which prompts you to behave with propriety to me; but, to a love like mine, this will not ſuffice: I muſt be aſſured that we may live together without being miſerable; for, though I could not reſolve to ſeparate myſelf from you, yet, Helena, I cannot anſwer for the conſequence of this ſo apparent reluctance in you to be happy; I fear it will be the lot of both to be wretched for life." Helena, hurt at the reproach which conveyed a proof of affection, and at the ſame time threatened her with future evils, was yet obliged to conceal the real cauſe of a diſtreſs which offended and wounded lord Farnham. He ſat down when he had done ſpeaking: a melancholy gloom overſpread his countenance, and, folding his arms, and fixing his eyes, he remained immoveable and ſilent. Helena could not endure to behold him in that ſituation; had he given way to his uſual violence of rage, terror had been the only ſentiment excited in her breaſt, but, to ſee him in a dejected poſture, rather deploring their mutual misfortune, than denouncing, with angry words, the vengeance of diſappointed

pointed power,——melted her into the tenderest concern. She roſe and approached him; ſhe took his hand; ſhe intreated him to believe, "her greateſt pleaſure muſt ariſe from contributing to his happineſs; and that her greateſt ſorrow muſt flow from beholding him otherwiſe; do not, my dear lord," continued ſhe, "do not ſuffer imaginary misfortunes to diſturb your felicity; believe me, I am the faithful partaker of all your griefs; allow me then to ſhare your tranquility; let me conjure you to baniſh your uneaſineſs, and return to the company; and, if you pleaſe, I will accompany you." Lord Farnham riſing from his ſeat, folded her to his heart, and exclaimed, "You are dearer to me, Helena, than language can expreſs! Forgive me then the unjuſt reproaches I have loaded you with; and believe that my affection alone makes me thus jealous of your love; but you are always ſuperior to me, and every hour more highly eſteemed: I will now leave you, to return as you deſire; and if, in the evening, you feel inclined to walk or ride, I ſhall be moſt happy to attend you." He then left her, not a little delighted with the anxiety ſhe had diſcovered for his peace, and the regard ſhe had diſplayed. Helena, too, was more compoſed, as ſhe perceived, that, whatever might be her other vexations, ſhe had gained a conſiderable conqueſt over the temper of lord Farnham. In the evening he drove her and the counteſs in his phaeton, and his efforts to entertain them were ſucceſsful. He never before appeared ſo amiable to others, or was ſo free from diſagreeable ſenſations himſelf: this harmony continued, without interruption, for ſome time. The count kept his promiſe of ſilence,

and all things wore a face of eaſe and tranquility; the different turn of character in each individual was happily blended in a general converſation.

CHAP. LVI.

AN invitation to dinner often took the count and lord Farnham ſome miles from the chateau, and left the ladies, who generally declined theſe parties, to amuſe themſelves: one of theſe days, which proved more than commonly fine and pleaſant, Mademoiſelle Granville prevailed on Helena to take a walk; Julia was confined with a ſlight indiſpoſition, and the counteſs was, at all times, unable to engage in long walks. Helena then and Charlotte ſallied forth alone; the latter conducted her companion to the edge of the river, which looked ſo very inviting, that they both expreſſed a wiſh to go upon it: the count's barge happened to be in ſight; Charlotte called to the men, who inſtantly brought it up to them, and Helena, tempted by the ſerenity of the ſky and water, followed the example of her guide, and ſtepped in, deſiring they might not go far from the chateau, as no one knew of their intention when they ſet out: they entered into converſation, and Helena having her back to the ſhore did not, for ſome time, perceive they had left the chateau and its environs far behind them; on looking back ſhe was ſurpriſed, and begged, "that Mademoiſelle would order the men to return home inſtantly; if

if lord Farnham is come from his viſit, he will," ſaid ſhe, "be much diſpleaſed at our going by ourſelves, ſo pray let us get home as faſt as we can." Charlotte laughed at her eagerneſs to return, and ſaid, "If they will leave us, they muſt expect that we ſhall try to entertain ourſelves in their abſence; you would not ſit at home to moan the loſs of your huſband's company, my dear, would you?" Helena, without regarding her raillery, perſiſted in her deſire to get back to the chateau, before the evening was too far advanced; but Charlotte replied, "The men have their orders, and you, my dear lady Farnham, have embarked on a voyage which, perhaps you did not intend, but will not be diſpleaſed with." "What," cried Helena, "can you mean? explain yourſelf I entreat you." "Only," ſaid ſhe, "that a carriage will take us up a little lower down the river, as it would be dangerous to remain ſo long on the water, and lord Farnham might perhaps be angry you know." Helena could not tell what to think of her ſarcaſtic manner, and why ſhe had been betrayed, in ſome ſort, into an excurſion which ſeemed to have been before ſettled without her knowledge; ſhe felt uneaſy, yet did not apprehend any danger: they ſtill proceeded, and at length diſcovered the carriage; in a few minutes they had reached it, but Helena's aſtoniſhment and fear did not abate, on ſeeing the count at the edge of the water; he carried her out of the barge without ſpeaking, or aſking her conſent, and placed her in the chaiſe; he then helped his ſiſter in, and got in himſelf, ordering his ſervants to drive to the chateau as faſt as poſſible. Helena was diſpleaſed at this ſtratagem,

which ſeemed contrived to bring the count and her together; and, making no doubt but they were on the road home, reſolved to preſerve ſilence, to convince both the brother and ſiſter of her diſlike to their artifice. The count made many attempts to draw her into converſation, but in vain; ſhe gave him civil, but laconic anſwers. The evening began to cloſe; Helena deſired to know, "How long it would be before they reached home?" "Divine Helena," replied the count, "it will be ſome hours ere we arrive at the place of our deſtination; but, be not alarmed; the man who adores you, who, for you, forgets that he is a huſband, a father, and a friend, will not ſuffer you to be injured; be compoſed then." "My lord," replied Helena, with the firmeſt tone of voice ſhe could aſſume, "did you not ſolemnly promiſe, that you would never again offend me, by an avowal of ſentiments ſo contrary to every principal of honor and virtue? What have you diſcovered in my character, which could induce you to believe, I would liſten to profeſſions ſo oppoſite to my duty and affection for lord Farnham? and, do you expect, my lord, that he will tamely ſubmit to inſult? you might know him better." "My angel," anſwered the count, "I can have no fears of Farnham's reſentment, as we ſhall ſoon be out of his reach for ever; for, be aſſured, I have not proceeded ſo far, without knowing that to retreat was impoſſible: in ſhort, I cannot, will not live without you: we are now on the road to an eſtate of mine, beyond the confines of the French kingdom; from thence I will fly to any quarter of the globe you like beſt, where none ſhall know that we are not united by aught

but

but love." "Hold!" cried Helena, "nor ſhock me by a language ſo full of wickedneſs and horror! know, that from my ſoul I deſpiſe, I deteſt you! and," continued ſhe, turning to Charlotte, "can it be a female, to whom I owe my preſent dreadful ſituation? Can you forget the dictates of virtue and humanity, of nature, ſo far as to be the vile inſtrument of an infamous plot? Oh! for mercy's, for honor's ſake, relent, before I loſe my ſenſes! for, be aſſured, I will rather die than be a partaker of your guilt." "Why, my love," ſaid the count, taking her hands, "why will you agitate yourſelf? In every thing elſe command me; but in this I cannot comply." "Great God!" exclaimed Helena, "to what a ſtate am I reduced! am I thus to endure inſult and, have no power to avenge myſelf! Pray let me go! I conjure you, by all that is ſacred! do not plunge your ſoul in crimes which muſt draw down the vengeance of heaven!" "How can you affect ſuch violent ſorrow?" ſaid the baſe, the cruel Charlotte. "Do we not know that lord Farnham is an object of diſlike to you? Can you then really lament a releaſe from the tyrannic power of a huſband you do not love? My brother adores you; is not the exchange then in your power? You will ſoon learn to think ſo." "Never, never!" cried Helena, almoſt frantic with grief, "my ſoul ſhall never know ſuch guilt!" She dropped on her knees; ſhe wept; ſhe intreated; but all to no purpoſe. The horſes flew like lightning, and were only changed once ere the carriage ſtopped. The count carried Helena in his arms into an old caſtle; ſhe was more dead than alive: he conveyed her into an apartment,

large

large and gloomy; the few lights in it only ſerved to render its appearance more horrible: the furniture had once been magnificent, but time had made conſiderable depredations on it. Here he placed her in a chair, and, kneeling by her, intreated her to look with an eye of pity on his love and his ſufferings; aſſured her, ſhe was the miſtreſs of his fate, and ſhould command him in every thing but parting from her. "Go," ſaid ſhe, puſhing him from her, "go, my lord; and do not torture me, by the ſight of a man, who has plunged me in endleſs miſery; for never can my heart know comfort more: Unhappy, miſerable Helena! what malignant power prevailed at thy birth? or, for what cauſe art thou to be thus puniſhed? My head! my poor head will not ſuſtain theſe dreadful calamities; leave me," continued ſhe, leaning her face on her hands, "and do not drive me mad." The night was far advanced when they arrived; a collation was provided, but Helena refuſed to touch a morſel. Charlotte then deſired to know, "if ſhe ſhould attend her to her apartment?" Helena caſt a look of contempt on her, and replied, "ſhe wiſhed to be alone." "I ſhall leave you then," ſaid ſhe, "perhaps my brother may find means to reſtore your accuſtomed gentleneſs. Adieu, my dear lady; I expect, when we meet again, it will be in more harmony of ſpirit." She laughed at the dejected figure of the poor Helena, and was quitting the room; when, ſtarting up, Helena cried out. "Good God! what will become of me! Has every virtuous, every humane ſentiment forſaken you? if they have not, oh! do not confine me to eternal wretchedneſs!" She had ſeized hold of Charlotte's arm,

arm, as ſhe addreſſed her; and, overcome by emotions, ſhe ſunk lifeleſs on the floor; the count raiſed her up; ſhe was inſenſible to her ſituation, to her miſery, and his affliction: ſhe opened her eyes once more; but, on beholding herſelf in his arms, inſtantly relapſed, and continued, for ſome time, dead to all her griefs: when at length, ſhe recovered again. He conjured her to be compoſed, and ſolemnly ſwore, "that ſhe ſhould remain undiſturbed, and alone in her apartment, if ſhe rather choſe it, or elſe a female attendant would wait her commands." Recovering herſelf, ſhe ſaid, "ſhe wiſhed to be alone, and ſhould depend on his promiſe, not to attempt ſeeing her till ſhe was more able to talk with him." Fearful of her having any return of the alarming fits ſhe had only juſt recovered, he repeated his promiſe, and ſhe retired to a room provided for her; here ſhe reſolved to watch the return of day; to ruminate on her wretched condition; and to implore the protection of heaven. A violent flood of tears ſomewhat relieved her; and, having diſmiſſed the old woman who lighted her, ſhe locked the door, and ſat down to recollect herſelf, and conſider how ſhe ſhould act, and if there was no probable means of eſcaping, which indeed ſhe feared; tho' ſhe determined to run all hazards, to releaſe herſelf from the power of the count.

CHAP.

CHAP. LVII.

AFTER reflecting ſome moments on her ſituation, Helena began to think ſhe had been much too blame, in neglecting to try whether her purſe and her intreaties might not have procured her a friend in the old woman, who had attended her to her room; it was true, there was little probability that the count would ſuffer any one to come near her, whoſe fidelity he had the ſmalleſt reaſon to doubt; but, circumſtanced as ſhe was, deſpair taught her to catch at the ſhadow of aſſiſtance, and ſhe reſolved, that, as whatever might befal her, in attempting to eſcape, muſt be infinitely ſhort of the miſery ſhe then felt, to make an effort to relieve herſelf from his power; ſhe examined the windows; they opened without difficulty, but, by the little light the heavens afforded, (for they were overcaſt) ſhe diſcovered, that their height from the ground rendered it impoſſible to deſcend through them. No attempts had been made to lock her in her room: but the little precaution taken to guard her, ſhe reaſonably conſidered as a proof, that the count was ſo ſecure of his victim, and ſo certain of his power, that he had avoided alarming her fears, by any evident meaſures to prevent her leaving the chateau; tho' theſe conſiderations, added to her other inquietudes, had left her without any great hopes of ſucceſs, yet ſhe perſiſted in her determination, to make an eſſay, when ſhe thought the count and his ſiſter had retired for the night. She waited with

with the moſt anxious impatience, till the clock ſtruck one: It was a deep and hollow ſound, from an old clock in an adjacent tower; it vibrated along the galleries, and ſtruck a damp to her heart; ſhe opened her door gently; all was quiet again; ſhe advanced a few ſteps, her ſpirits failed, and ſhe ſhrunk involuntarily back: deſpair again giving her courage, after a moment's pauſe, ſhe proceeded. "My condition," ſaid ſhe, mentally, "cannot be worſe; I will try then, if this habitation does not contain ſome one whoſe heart is yet uncorrupt; whoſe feelings are not deadened by depravity." She moved on; her own footſteps alarmed her; her blood almoſt congealed with apprehenſion, ſhe trembled, yet walked forward, without daring to look back. By the faint light of a wax taper which ſhe had in her hand, ſhe at length reached a ſmall winding ſtaircaſe; but, not having the leaſt knowledge of the ſituation of the apartment ſhe had juſt left, ſhe could form no idea to what part of the chateau the ſtairs would lead; ſhe could not flatter herſelf that any avenue was unguarded, but to return was impoſſible; ſhe therefore deſcended with a painful trepidation, which ſo much overpowered her, that ſhe ſunk on the bottom ſtep, almoſt breathleſs with fear;—having a little recovered herſelf, ſhe again roſe to proceed: 'twas a narrow paſſage, which, by frequent turnings, concealed the apartments it led to; it appeared to have long been deſerted by the family, from the ruinous ſtate it was in. Though the movement of Helena was as light as poſſible, yet, echo returned the ſound of her foot; ſhe ſtopped and looked round her, filled with a horrible dread of being

diſcovered; but all was ſtill as death, and in another minute ſhe found herſelf in a large ſquare room unfurniſhed, and with a door oppoſite to the one by which ſhe entered; ſhe gently cloſed that, and approached the other; as ſhe ſeized the lock, her whole frame ſhook; it required more ſtrength than her ſituation afforded her; ſhe was obliged to ſet down the candle, and exert all her powers; at length it flew open; a cold damp vapour met her; the flame of the candle died away, and left the terrified Helena in total darkneſs; in attempting to open the door, ſhe was forced a few paces into the inner room, it clapped to with a report which deprived her of the ſmall portion of ſpirits ſhe had yet retained, and ſhe ſunk down on the ground, with juſt life enough to feel the horror of her ſituation; ſhe had almoſt reſigned her ſenſes, when a ſmall noiſe aſſailed her ear; ſhe liſtened, and grew ſick as it increaſed; ſhe caſt her eyes towards the ſide from whence it proceeded, but all was ſtill impenetrable darkneſs; ſhe poured out her ſoul in prayers to heaven: "Oh thou," ſhe ſoftly exclaimed, "whoſe eye pervades the inmoſt receſſes of the mind, thou, to whom, darkneſs and light are equal, O chear my fainting ſpirits with one ray of divine eſſence; protect me from the evils that ſurround me; and conduct me in innocence to the grave; for my ſoul is weary of its mortal habitation." She had ſcarcely breathed forth her prayers, ere a ſudden light broke in upon her; a ſmall door opened, and a man entered with a candle in his hand; ſhe examined him; it was not the count, as ſhe had feared; ſhe roſe, and advancing towards him, cried out, "If the ſentiments of nature and humanity are not unknown

to

to you, I conjure you;"—exhauſted with the conflicts ſhe had undergone, her limbs refuſed any longer to ſupport her; her voice failed, and ſhe fell at the ſtranger's feet. "'Tis no viſion," ſaid he, ſtarting with aſtoniſhment; "'tis real ſubſtantial wretchedneſs like my own," continued he, in a ſoftened tone of voice. "O lady! whoever you are, by whatever fate conducted to the abode of miſery, I pity you." He then raiſed her up, and, while he gazed on her palid countenance, which was yet beauteous, he ſaw life reanimate her features; ſhe opened her eyes, and beheld thoſe of the ſtranger fixed on her, with a mingled expreſſion of admiration, compaſſion, and ſurpriſe. The traits of ſenſibility ſhe diſcovered revived her hopes of deliverance, and ſhe thanked him in the moſt moving accents, for his attention to the moſt unfortunate of human beings. At firſt ſhe was incoherent in her gratitude and her intreaties for his protection, but, after a little time, ſhe gave him a ſuccinct account of herſelf; when ſhe had finiſhed, he exclaimed, "That ſuch villains do exiſt is too certain! but he, whoſe baſe ſoul could injure the faireſt work of nature, deſerves all the torments he is capable of enduring. You behold in me, madam, a man ſtained with crimes of a fearful die; baniſhed from ſociety, to avoid the puniſhment due to a murderer; but be ſatisfied, I will protect you with my life, and ſhall conſider it well laid down to ſecure your ſafety and repoſe: I am here concealed from all the world, except the old couple, who keep the chateau in the abſence of the family; my ſervant, who is ſon to them, procured me this retreat; and here, in this ſolitary and miſerable

ſtructure,

ſtructure, which retains a ſlight veſtige of antient magnificence, have I ſpent many a weary hour; bu', ſince I can afford you aſſiſtance, I will not regret them. The ſudden arrival of the count filled us all with conſternation; and, after much debate, my faithful ſervant pointed out to me a ſmall apartment behind this old chapel, where he conveyed my bed, and whatever I might want during the ſtay of the family; I was too much abſorbed in my own griefs to attend to any thing elſe, and therefore never enquired what brought the count ſo unexpectedly: a few minutes ago, ſuppoſing all was ſtill, I reſolved to venture forth, to breath my penitent vows vows to the throne above, at the foot of this altar; ever bleſſed be the impulſe which conducted me to your ſupport." The ſtranger ceaſed, and Helena aſſured him of her everlaſting gratitude. She had by this time diſcovered that they were in an old chapel, which, from the decayed ornaments that had adorned and aided the efforts of devotion, denoted at once, the antient ſplendour and ſuperſtition of former poſſeſſors; round the altar hung the ſymbols of a religion that has ſpread war and deſolation over the earth, and which in their preſent ſtate, conveyed to the mind a full conviction of their vanity and weakneſs, for time had almoſt defaced and mouldered them to their parent duſt. It was here the ſtranger meant to addreſs the ſupreme being; and it was here that Helena implored the protection of heaven. He then conducted her to the room he had juſt quitted, where he deſired her to repoſe herſelf a few minutes while he went in ſearch of his ſervant. Helena ſuffered him to lead her in, and received from him a little wine and water,

water, of which ſhe ſtood in need, being quite worn out with her fears. He ſoon returned, followed by his man, who undertook to convey them, by unfrequented paths, to the next village. "But how," ſaid the ſtranger, to Helena, "can a form delicate as yours, ſupport itſelf in a long and toilſome walk, and haraſſed as you already are by fatigue and emotion?" "Nothing appears either difficult or too laborious," anſwered Helena, "if it preſerves me from the count's power; let me entreat you to haſten our departure, for every moment ſeems an age, while I am under the ſame roof with him," She then took hold of the ſtranger's arm, and, with revived ſtrength and ſpirit, followed their guide, who led them through a ſmall door, of which he had the key. Helena's impatience prompted her to walk on, without feeling how unable ſhe was to proceed far; but it was not before they were ſome miles from the chateau, that ſhe exclaimed. "I can go no farther, here let me ſit down and die!" Her guide and protector, who had done all in his power to ſooth her apprehenſions and ſupport her ſpirits, during the ſhort, though tedious journey, now ſaw, with unavailing ſorrow and diſtreſs, that ſhe was indeed unable to move from the place they were then in: after a moment's pauſe, he ordered his ſervant to haſten on to the next town or village, and procure ſome kind of a conveyance, by which they might conduct Helena with leſs fatigue, to a place of ſafety. He then threw himſelf on the ground by her, and ſupported her head, as ſhe lay almoſt unconſcious of her exiſtence. In this truly deplorable condition they remained for ſome time, till at length

length the faithful meſſenger appeared, to the great relief of his maſter. A tolerable vehicle accompanied him, and he had the conſideration to procure ſome reſtorative drops, of which Helena ſtood ſo much in need; they contrived to pour a little down her throat, and then ſeated her in the carriage, which proceeded to the place from whence it had been brought. Helena continued too ill all the way, to take any notice of what paſſed, and, when ſhe arrived at the poſt-houſe, ſhe was immediately put to bed. Her conductor calculated the time that might ſafely be allowed for reſt; conſidering from the hour when they left the caſtle; how long it would be before Helena's flight would be diſcovered. While, from exceſs of fatigue, ſhe ſlept, he took care to have all things ready for their departure at the appointed hour. When he ſent to call her, ſhe roſe, and with ſome aſſiſtance, was again conveyed to the carriage, and, ſomewhat relieved by her ſleep, made an attempt to expreſs her obligations to the ſtranger, whoſe generous attention had reſcued her from the miſery and deſpair in which ſhe had at firſt preſented herſelf to his view.

CHAP.

CHAP. LVIII.

LITTLE converſation paſſed during this ſecond ſtage, except a few attempts made by Helena, to convince her unknown guardian of her gratitude; but he intreated her not to fatigue her ſpirits with talking, which, indeed, ſhe was little able to do. It was not long before the ſtranger welcomed Helena to a place of ſafety; as it was now evident, ſuppoſing the count was to overtake them, that it would be impoſſible for him to perſiſt in his villainous deſign, for they were in the midſt of a world which could not behold ſuch an outrage unmoved or unrevenged. He conducted her into an apartment where dinner was provided; Helena, at the earneſt requeſt of her companion, attempted to eat. She was by this time, perfectly aſſured of her ſecurity, and began to recollect that, from what her generous protector had ſaid, ſhe had moſt likely expoſed him to great danger: poſſeſſed of this idea, ſhe felt much alarmed on his account, and expreſſed her fears. "If Sir," ſaid ſhe, "your uncommon benevolence to me, ſhould have plunged you into any difficulties, how ſhall I forgive myſelf? and, what you mentioned, when providence directed me to you, and what I, in my own diſtraction, did not attend to, leads me to believe, that, by appearing in public, you are expoſed to danger; fly then, I conjure you, and do not let me be the unhappy inſtrument of misfortune to

one,

one, to whom I am indebted for more than life: go, Sir, I beſeech you, and leave me to return to the chateau de Granville; to which place I can procure a guard. I dare not aſk the calamitous circumſtances which have involved you in a fatal neceſſity of quitting ſociety, which your merits were deſigned to bleſs; but yet I know not how to take leave of my kind deliverer, ignorant as I muſt be, to whom I am bound in eternal gratitude and obligations, ſuch as time can never efface; but I will not pry into a ſecret you have juſt reaſons for carrying in your own boſom; but truſt, that, when time ſhall have happily removed the veil, which is, I am convinced, oppreſſive to your feelings; you will not fail to give lord Farnham and myſelf, an opportunity of teſtifying our ſenſe of ſuch great and important ſervices. But while I talk you may be in danger; let me intreat you then, to loſe no time in regaining a ſafe retreat, from which I have forced you." "Oh madam!" anſwered the ſtranger, "I am, it is too true, liable to pay that forfeit, crimes like mine deſerve; but I will not fly from juſtice, nor will I quit you, till ſafely lodged under the protection of the happy man who has a legal title to guard you. I will not wound your ears with a ſtory full of horror; nor teach you to deſpiſe and turn with diſguſt from him, whoſe fortune it has been, to render you a trifling ſervice: reſt aſſured, madam, that any good I have been able to effect in your favor, muſt conſtitute the only happineſs of my life. I fled once to avoid an ignominious death: I left my country, and retired to ſome relations in Ireland; but, purſued by a guilty conſcience, I could not remain ſatisfied,

but

but returned back into France, with an intention of throwing myſelf into the jaws of ruin. A friend, more anxious for my life than I was myſelf, prevailed upon me to follow the advice of the faithful fellow who attends us, to ſeek an aſylum, till a pardon could be procured for me, in the old chateau; where his father and mother lived alone, and where no one of the family had been for many years, or were ever likely to come. The old woman, on the arrival of the count, which threw them into confuſion, adviſed me to conceal myſelf, where you, madam, found me. I made no enquiries what brought the count, being too much abſorbed in my own griefs, to think of any thing elſe. I ſhall never ceaſe to conſider, the ſolitary hours I have paſſed in anguiſh there, as the moſt fortunate of my life, ſince they were preparatory to an event ſo conducive to your peace."

CHAP. LIX.

"WHAT can I ſay," anſwered Helena, "to convince you, how much I am intereſted in your ſafety? but why will you perſiſt to ſeek an aſylum? for my ſake, if not for your own, let me prevail: for, can I ever be at eaſe, if I have condemned you to the fate you fled from? your family and friends too, will they not have reaſon to load me with reproach?" At the mention of his family, the unhappy

happy ſtranger ſighed from the bottom of his heart, and replied, "Alas! the family you ſpeak of, madam, can only know peace, by conſigning all memory of a wretch like myſelf to oblivion: from them you have nothing to fear, and the only friend my misfortunes have left me, can have no cauſe to reproach you; he will rather conſider you as one to whom I am indebted, for the performance of an action, which may perhaps ſoften, if any thing can, the enormity of my crimes; do not then deprive me of the ſatisfaction of attending you; and beſides, I am not certain, that by this time my pardon is not otbained; at all events I believe I run no riſks."

Helena, though much concerned at the obſtinacy of her friend, for ſuch ſhe might juſtly ſtile him, found it was impoſſible to prevail on him to leave her: ſhe could, by no means, reconcile herſelf to involve in diſtreſs the man, to whoſe humane and generous care, ſhe was ſo highly obliged; but was forced to ſubmit to his determination, having requeſted him to quit the public road they were then on, and purſue ſome other, to the chateau de Granville, at which place ſhe ardently wiſhed to find herſelf; and left him, ſaying, "ſhe would only enable herſelf to proceed, by a ſhort reſt where they then were." She had but juſt left the room ere the ſtranger heard a loud ſcream; he inſtantly concluded, the count had followed and overtaken them; when, ſeizing one of his piſtols, he ruſhed out, and beheld Helena in the arms of a young man, who ſeemed to regard her with the moſt anxious enquiry in his face: by them ſtood two other

other gentlemen; one of whom held the hand of Helena in his: he approached them, and Helena recovering herſelf, ſaid, "Let me preſent my guardian genius, my kind deliverer, to you; receive the moſt generous of men; and, if poſſible, thank him for preſerving me from a fate the moſt dreadful." Lord Huntley and lord Charles Sidney, for ſuch they proved to be, were juſt entering the houſe as Helena was going to her apartment. Joy had overpowered her, and ſhe flew into lord Charles's arms, he being foremoſt; nothing could exceed their aſtoniſhment on meeting her in ſuch a ſituation; the feathers in her hat were broken and hung all ways; her gown was torn to pieces, and much ſoiled; and her whole dreſs and appearance in the greateſt diſorder. For an explanation of her expreſſions and her uncommon figure, ſhe returned with them to the room ſhe had juſt left, and there gave an account of herſelf; and again repeated, in the moſt lively ſtrains of gratitude, her obligations to the unknown friend, who had reſcued her. Here lord Huntley and lord Charles, both joined her, and ſoon after they introduced the count de St. Clare, who accompanied them. Helena, finding herſelf much fatigued, by the time they had talked over the affair, and it having been agreed that the whole party ſhould remain where they were that night, and altogether ſet out for the chateau de Granville next day, took leave of her friends, for that night, and retired to bed. In her abſence lord Huntley and lord Charles renewed their expreſſions of gratitude to the deliverer of a beloved ſiſter, whoſe danger made them ſhudder even on recollection. Lord Huntley had not ſeen

the

the too charming Helena, ſince the fatal diſcovery; and, well regulated as the mind of this amiable man was, he could not ſo ſuddenly behold her without emotion; his heart was too ſuſceptible for his peace; and the thouſand beauties which ſhone around her, were not to be gazed on with indifference; and when he thought upon the inſult and indignity ſhe had received, his wonted ſweetneſs of diſpoſition forſook him, and he deſired nothing ſo much as to puniſh the villain, who had profaned the ſacred laws of honor, of friendſhip, and hoſpitality; but a few minutes ſerved to convince him, that an injured huſband would not ſuffer the right of juſtly revenging his wrongs, to be wreſted from him. Lord Charles, with his accuſtomed warmth, execrated the abandoned count, and poured out his gratitude to the ſtranger.

CHAP. LX.

THE next morning Helena and her eſcort once more ſet forward on their journey; lord Huntley and the count de St. Clare begged the ſtranger to accept a place in their chaiſe, while lord Charles accompanied his ſiſter in the other carriage; ſhe gladly ſeized this opportunity of acquainting him with the alteration in the temper of lord Farnham; "which," continued ſhe, "if ever we meet again, promiſes me the ſerenity I have ſo long

long ſighed for; but who knows that I may not at th s moment be deprived of a huſband I was beginning to feel an affection for; perhaps the unhappy event which has tore me from his protection, may alſo have proved fatal to his life; for, if the count and he ſhould meet, I know lord Farnham's warmth too well, to hope, any thing but death will ſeparate them." Helena wept over the image ſhe had but too juſtly created, nor could lord Charles believe, that her apprehenſions were groundleſs; he however, argued on the ſtrong probability there was, that they might not encounter each other, as lord Farnham was ignorant of the road the count had taken, who would moſt probably, avoid a man he had ſo greatly injured. This diſcourſe could not quiet the fears of Helena, who felt an unconquerable impatience to arrive at the end of her journey, which was begun early, and continued with very little interruption, till the evening, which brought them to the chateau. A preſentiment of what was yet to be endured, ſeized the trembling Helena, as ſhe deſcended from the chaiſe. Lord Charles almoſt carried her into the veſtibule, where ſhe eagerly enquired for lord Farnham of her own footman, who, with ſeveral other ſervants, had crowded out on the return of his lady, whoſe abſence had cauſed ſo much conſternation. "My lord," replied he, "ſet out from the chateau, late that night your ladyſhip left it; he ordered me to wait here and ſend a meſſenger to Paris if you returned, my lady, or we heard any thing from or of you." Helena then aſked for the counteſs and Julia; the counteſs, they ſaid was very ill, confined to her bed, and Julia was with her. Helena, alarmed

at

at the illneſs of the amiable counteſs, but too well conjectured that ſhe was, the cauſe of it; deſired that Julia might be ſent for; then, followed by the gentlemen, ſhe went up ſtairs: Julia met them as they paſſed along the gallery, and, throwing herſelf into Helena's arms, exclaimed, "Thank heaven, my dear friend, you are returned! you know not what we have ſuffered on your account; and, my poor ſiſter! alas, I fear ſhe will never quit her apartment more." "May I not ſee her?" ſaid Helena, "and endeavour, by every act of friendſhip, to alleviate the pain of thoſe wounds I have innocently given her: lead me to her, my dear Julia! that I may tell her, that not for worlds would I have injured her; ſhe, all gentle and good as ſhe is, would pity me, if ſhe knew how much I have endured ſince we parted. Here," ſaid ſhe, turning, to the friend who had reſcued her, "here behold the author of my deliverance; and let me alſo preſent to you my brothers, lord Huntley and lord Charles Sidney, and the count de St. Clare." Julia received them with grace and politeneſs, and lamented that the ſituation of her ſiſter would render their reſidence at the chateau leſs agreeable than ſhe could have wiſhed, "but unhappily circumſtanced as we are, I hope, my lords," continued ſhe, "you will afford us your counſel and aſſiſtance; and, that theſe gentlemen will do us the favor to remain here, though we have little but melancholy ſcenes to preſent to them." They bowed, and readily agreed to undertake any thing which might, in the leaſt contribute to ſoften the evils ſo much to be dreaded and lamented. Julia then conducted Helena to the apartment of her dying ſiſter;

ſiſter; ſhe approached the bed, whereon lay the counteſs, pale and almoſt expiring. Helena wept bitterly at the ſight, and cried out, "Oh, my friend! and is it thus I find you! am I condemned to behold you in a ſituation ſo deplorable?" "Heaven be praiſed!" returned the counteſs, in a feeble voice, "my prayers are heard, and you, moſt amiable of women, are reſtored to us; but weep not for me, I conjure you, I ſhall quickly be at reſt; my life has long been a burden to myſelf and to the unhappy man whoſe vices have brought me to the grave: but how did you eſcape from a plot too well laid for your deſtruction?" "Heaven," ſaid Helena, "was graciouſly pleaſed to conduct me to a ſtranger, whoſe heart was not ſteeled againſt diſtreſs like mine; to him I owe my ſafety; but my dear friend, I will not now fatigue and agitate your ſpirits with a melancholy recital of what I have ſuffered; ſome other time, when I hope to ſee you better." "Ah!" ſaid the counteſs, "that time will never be on this ſide the grave: tell me then now, my amiable friend, how you were reſtored to us?" Helena complied, and gave as ſhort an account as poſſible, of all that had occurred ſince ſhe was forced away. Julia wept over the relation; and the counteſs, lifting her hands and eyes to heaven, exclaimed, "Oh, merciful father of mankind! I thank thee, that thou didſt not ſuffer the crimes of him, on whom my ſoul has reſted for peace, but found it not, to plunge the innocent into everlaſting miſery. My dear lady Farnham, I die in peace, now that I am aſſured of your ſafety and return: poor lord Farnham, whoſe anxiety was indeed great, ſhould be informed

ed of your arrival, if it were poſſible to find him." "A ſervant ſet out immediately on my appearance here," replied Helena, "and will, I hope in God, bring back his lord, for whom I now feel the moſt poignant ſolicitude: but why will you not allow us to hope that we ſhall ſee you reſtored to health once more?" "Would you wiſh," anſwered the dying counteſs, "to recall me to a life of ſorrow, to a world of woe? No, my friend; I have trod the dreary path, I hope, in innocence, and I am now on the confines of eternity: a proſpect of that bliſsful region, where the weary ſhall find peace, animates my deſire to be gone. My children alone, have power to cauſe a wiſh to linger here, where I have experienced little but miſery; but to you, to Julia, and to lord Farnham, I commit them; preſerve them then for my ſake; ſmooth the thorny paths of life, and render this tedious pilgrimage as free from ſorrow as poſſible; and may the bleſſings of peace deſcend upon you all; may your lives be tranquil, and your deaths a glorious change, from the felicity of this world to the exalted joys of another!"

While ſhe ſpoke, a heavenly ſmile lighted up her pale countenance; ſorrow gave way to the hope of a ſpeedy and bliſsful immortality, and ſhe appeared already near her deſtined and wiſhed-for reſt; but, as the ſoul grew more refined, the body became weaker, and, having taken from the hands of her weeping friends, the draught to compoſe her ſpirits, this excellent lady ſoon after ſunk into a quiet ſlumber. 'Twas then, Helena deſired Julia to give her a circumſtantial account of all that had happened at the chateau in her abſence. "When you left us,"

replied

replied Julia, "as we ſuppoſed, to ſtroll about the woods; we were perfectly eaſy, not ſuſpecting you could be in any danger. When lord Farnham returned, he ſaid the count had been called on to attend ſome perſon on buſineſs, and had left the company early; he then aſked for you; we anſwered, you had walked out with Charlotte; he took his hat and ſaid he would go and bring you home, for that it was growing too late to walk, with ſafety to your health. About ſupper time he returned, and was much ſurpriſed to find you were not yet come, for he had not been able to meet with you. We then began to be uneaſy; lord Farnham walked about the room in the utmoſt anxiety and impatience of mind; ſtill you came not; he then diſpatched ſeveral ſervants to ſearch round the neighbourhood: they returned, but could hear no tidings of you, except that two ladies had been ſeen in a barge, going down the river: we ſent to enquire if the count's barge was gone out; they brought word it was, with all the men belonging to it. Our alarm became violent; no one appeared; we then ſent a ſervant to the place the count ſaid he was going to: he had never been there. My ſiſter, who had begun to ſuſpect the dreadful cauſe of your abſence, in all the agony of her ſoul, cried out, "Oh, my God! though it is too plain lady Farnham is loſt, betrayed, fly my lord! fly, and ſave, if poſſible, your wife." Then, terrified at what had eſcaped her, on ſeeing the countenance of lord Farnham aſſume an expreſſion of horror and amazement, and his eyes flaſh fire, ſhe ſunk dead on the floor, I, in vain, endeavouring to ſupport her. Lord Farnham, moved at her con-

dition, approached her, and taking her in his arms, conveyed her to a ſopha. "Amiable, unhappy woman!" he cried, "I fear thou art the wife of a villain, a curſed deteſted villain, whoſe blood muſt flow, to appeaſe my wrongs, my juſt reſentment."

CHAP. LXI.

MY ſiſter revived, and tears preſerved her from a relapſe for that time; lord Farnham then commending her to my care, left us, and as we ſoon heard that he had departed from the chateau, and his ſervants believed he was gone to Paris. My ſiſter, terrified when ſhe found he was gone, threw herſelf into my arms, crying, "Oh Julia! what have I done? guilty unhappy woman; I have endangered the life of my huſband; doomed perhaps to death, the father of my dear children; or cauſed him to ſtain his hands with blood. What," continued ſhe, after a ſhort pauſe, "could I then leave the innocent and much injured Helena, to periſh by his brutality?" She wept, ſhe almoſt raved, and hung round me in an agony of grief. You will eaſily believe, that I was in no condition to offer her the conſolation ſhe ſtood ſo much in need of; I could only ſhed tears over her miſery, which at length, got a ſhort relief in inſenſibility. A long and death-like fit ſuſpended all her ſorrows, and I had her conveyed to bed, and ſent for the phyſician;

phyſician: by the time he could arrive, ſhe was come to herſelf. I aſked his opinion of my dear Matilda's ſituation; he bid me not encourage hope. "The counteſs," ſaid he, "has long laboured under a conſuming diſeaſe, and now, ſome violent ſhock ſeems to indicate a ſpeedy termination of her life; but for this, ſhe might have lingered ſome months longer." I had preſſed him to inform me; but what were my feelings, when I learnt, that I was ſo ſoon to bid adieu for ever, to the kindeſt friend, the moſt affectionate relation, my beloved and only ſiſter? "Oh! lady Farnham, I am ill prepared to ſuſtain this blow; and, when I reflect too, that ſhe has been deſtroyed by a villain, it breaks my heart. Oh! Matilda, what has thy gentle nature endured, from the moſt unfeeling of his ſex? thy ſpirit was unequal to ſuch brutal violence: the deteſted Charlotte, too, the vile, the infamous ſiſter of the moſt abandoned of mankind; they have together broken the heart of the beſt of women, of wives, and of mothers; but heaven will not ſuffer ſuch crimes to go unpuniſhed; vengeance will overtake and reward them." "Let us," ſaid Helena, whoſe countenance beſpoke the anguiſh of her ſoul, "let us not uſurp that power which belongs to the Almighty diſpoſer of events, or dare to condemn any of his creatures, but leave vengeance to heaven, to whom alone it pertains. 'Tis too true, we have all experienced the moſt unexampled injuries from the count and his ſiſter; but we ought rather to hope they may ſee their errors; that they are not wholly abandoned of their Creator, but may yet become juſt. Our beloved friend, the amiable counteſs, is, for our ſakes, I

fear, going to leave this world, to receive the rewards due to her virtues; ſhe will quickly be an angel; while I, alas, am born to live, and perhaps taſte all the miſeries this dreadful act of villainy can entail! too likely I am condemned to moan the untimely death of lord Farnham; he may at this moment be expiring; while I, the innocent cauſe of all his misfortunes, am far from him. Oh Julia! where ſhall I find comfort?" Julia had none to impart; ſhe joined her tears with thoſe of Helena, as they ſat by the ſtill ſleeping counteſs. Julia, at length perceiving that Helena ſtood in great need of reſt, prevailed on her to quit the apartment of her friend, to whom ſhe could afford no aſſiſtance. They ſought the gentlemen, whom they found anxiouſly waiting their return. Helena again expreſſed the anguiſh of her mind from the uncertainty of what might be her huſband's fate. Lord Huntley having regarded her with attentive concern, ſaid, "My beloved ſiſter, do not anticipate evil? if poſſible, compoſe your ſpirits to-night, and to-morrow I will ſet out in ſearch of lord Farnham, whom I may venture to aſſure, cannot yet have met with the count; be ſatisfied that I will exert all my power to prevent miſchief, and reſtore to you a huſband whoſe happineſs you are; let me intreat you, depend upon me, and be aſſured I will leave nothing undone to re-eſtabliſh your peace." Helena would have told him how much ſhe felt his kindneſs, but there is a ſilent eloquence which ſpeaks to the heart more than words can expreſs—to thank him, would have been poor to her feelings; but he had too often gazed on a face where all the ſoul was portrayed, not to underſtand its expreſſion;

expreſſion; he now gazed, but he forgot not a moment that it was on a wife and ſiſter; nor could he in thought, injure the purity of her character, ſo far as to encourage any ſentiment which each title might not with honor allow. Helena had ever thought on him as on one where all the virtues were centred; one, whoſe every thought might be expoſed to public obſervation, without cauſing a bluſh or an uneaſy ſenſation; ſhe knew he was ſuperior in every reſpect; that his mind was exactly ſuited to a form where nature had written perfection; from ſuch a one what could ſhe fear? nothing did ſhe fear; ſhe was above diſguiſe; ſhe rejoiced in and ſhe returned his friendſhip and affection, and accepted his offered mediation. Julia and ſhe then took leave of them for that night; Helena retired to bed, while Julia lay down on a ſopha in her ſiſter's apartment. No material change happened, and early in the morning lord Huntley, according to his promiſe, left the chateau, accompanied by the count de St. Clare, leaving lord Charles and the ſtranger to take care of Helena in their abſence. In conſequence of the diſtance between the chateau and Paris, ſome days muſt of neceſſity elapſe ere any tidings could be tranſmitted from one place to the other. The counteſs grew worſe every hour. Helena, though filled with a tormenting anxiety for the fate of her huſband, neglected not to pay every office of friendſhip to the expiring Matilda, whoſe bed-ſide ſhe only left to give vent to feelings which were not to be ſubdued by any efforts. On the fourth day after lord Huntley's departure, the counteſs ſeemed ſo much exhauſted that a few hours muſt put a period

period to her exiſtence; ſhe languiſhed all the day, Julia and Helena waited in fearful expectation of her diſſolution every moment; ſtill ſhe lingered, and the night advanced; the gentlemen ſat in another room, that they might be ready to aſſiſt when the melancholy ſcene was cloſed by death. About twelve o'clock the outer bell rang loud; they ſtarted: Helena turned paler than ſhe was before; a cold chill trembling ſeized her; ſhe grew ſick, and ſighed heavily; Julia wept; the counteſs exclaimed, "Oh! father of mercies, help them to ſupport what it is thy will to inflict; for me, in mercy relieve me from this ſcene of woe." Julia was called out; Helena's apprehenſions increaſed, ſhe could not move; the counteſs fixed her dying eyes upon her, gently graſped her hand: Helena uttered in the accent of deſpair, "Oh my friend, what a world are we in! when is this miſery to be at an end?" The counteſs's woman juſt then entered with the two children, whom their mother had deſired to take leave of; Helena took this opportunity of quitting the apartment, impatient to learn the whole of a cataſtrophe, which ſhe expected, yet dreaded to hear; ſhe found Julia, lord Charles, and her unknown friend, conſulting together over a letter; ſhe read in their countenances the fatal contents. "Tell me," cried ſhe, "oh tell me all; ſuſpenſe is worſe than death!" "My dear ſiſter," ſaid lord Charles, "do not alarm yourſelf, my brother and lord Farnham are on the road to the chateau." "Have you not concealed ſomething? is lord Farnham unhurt?" They were ſilent. "I ſee," ſaid, ſhe "you are unwilling to tell me the truth; but I conjure you not

not to torture me, I muſt know the dreadful ſecret." "Lord Farnham is not perfectly well," replied he, "but I hope"—"Oh hope not!" exclaimed ſhe, "for diſappointment will cruſh it; hope is extinguiſhed in my breaſt, I ſhall never feel it more; oh my God! ſhall I never be at peace." Lord Charles had taken her hand as he ſpoke, ſhe withdrew it not; ſhe neither moved nor ſpoke after this exclamation; her eyes were fixed, ſhe wept not; the activity of her mind ſeemed ſuſpended, and reaſon appeared to have yielded up her power to the complicated miſeries which ſurrounded her; ſhe ſtood the ſilent image of ſorrow; ſhe ſighed, but that was the only token of remaining ſenſibility. They endeavoured to rouſe her recollection, but in vain; ſhe heard them not: lord Charles called upon her, the ſtranger advanced towards her, Julia wept aloud; ſhe was ſtill immoveable; ſpeculation no longer beamed from her eye, and the full boſom was unable to vent its ſufferings: her brother was diſtracted; her head dropped on his ſhoulders. "Oh, ſpeak to me, Helena!" cried he, "this is a ſight I cannot bear." He would have ſaid, for he felt the truth of it:

"Give ſorrow words; the grief that does not
"ſpeak,
"Whiſpers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it
"break."

"Misfortune has, I fear," continued he, "deſtroyed thy noble mind; what devaſtation has it made!" A tear fell on her pale cheek as he mourned over her, he could not reſtrain it; the ſtranger laid his head on the table, and audibly expreſſed his grief. A ſervant entering told them the

the counteſs was dying. Julia ſtarted; lord Charles ſaid he would now bear Helena into the room, perhaps ſuch a ſight may awaken her faculties; he raiſed her up and almoſt carried her to the bed-ſide of her friend, who ſtill retained life enough to obſerve the change in Helena; ſhe ſighed forth, "Thou lovely victim of a deſtructive paſſion! art thou then no longer thyſelf? has ſorrow ſubdued thee at length? but I truſt we ſhall meet above, where the wicked ceaſe from troubling, and the weary ſhall find reſt." Helena uttered a deep ſigh, and ſunk on the bed; lord Charles retired to conceal his emotion. Helena raiſed herſelf, ſhe gazed for a moment on the counteſs; recollection revived; ſhe ſeized the almoſt cold hand of her friend, and burſt into tears: by degrees ſhe perfectly recovered her intellects, and ſaw before her a form ſcarcely mortal; the enlivening rays of hope irradiated the pale countenance of death; the blood no longer flowed, it crept ſlowly along the veins; and, with a voice frequently interrupted for want of breath, the counteſs took leave of and bleſſed all her friends: then lifting her hands and eyes to heaven, ſhe ſoftly exclaimed, "Merciful God! turn the hearts of the diſobedient to the wiſdom of the juſt; and receive the ſoul of thy ſervant." Her lips continued to move, but her voice was heard no more; with her hand in that of Helena's ſhe gently expired: her ſoul fled to its peaceful manſion, and left her weeping and afflicted friends to mourn over the inanimate reſemblance of what once was beauty and virtue. Julia gave a loud ſhriek, when ſhe perceived her ſiſter was gone for ever; Helena threw herſelf on the body in

all

all the agonies of ſilent woe. When lord Charles was informed that the counteſs was no more; he went again to the apartment in order to convey Helena from a ſcene which might overpower her: he found Julia unable to attend to any thing but her own grief; and his ſiſter folding the lifeleſs form of her friend to her own boſom; he endeavoured to diſengage her; he entreated her to retire from the room; ſhe could not ſpeak; he then forced her away, and was much rejoiced to ſee her tears flow in great abundance, to the relief of her heart. The morning now approached, and Helena, quite worn out with watching and ſorrow, was put to bed, and happily the agitation of her mind was, for a time, ſuſpended by the balmy influence of refreſhing ſlumbers. It was late ere ſhe awaked, and the day was ſpent in leſs tumultuous, though not leſs real grief. It was the employment of lord Charles to ſuſtain the ſpirits of his unfortunate ſiſter.

CHAP. LXII.

ON the morning of the ſixth day, a ſervant arrived, to announce his lord's approach, accompanied by lord Huntley, the count de St. Clare, and another gentleman; it was with difficulty lord Charles ſupported Helena in the interval. At length ſuſpenſe was relieved, the carriages entered the court; lord Huntley ſoon appeared; he ently informed Helena that lord Farnham was

not in a condition to bear any ſurpriſe, and therefore begged ſhe would ſuffer him to be conveyed to his apartment, and a little prepared to ſee her before ſhe made her appearance. She ſaid ſhe would be guided by him in all things, ſo conſented to remain where ſhe was, till her lord enquired for her, ſatisfied that every thing would be done for his aſſiſtance as well as if ſhe herſelf directed or attended him, though no conſideration but that of injuring him, could have withheld her from his preſence. Lord Huntley again returned to ſee his orders with regard to lord Farnham obeyed. Julia ſtill kept her room, and deſired to be alone; lord Charles, the ſtranger, and Helena, were ſitting together, when the count de St. Clare entered, followed by the other gentleman, whom the ſervant had mentioned: they had advanced into the room before the perſon of the latter was fully ſeen; Helena firſt perceived him, and exclaimed, "Monſieur Derville!" but he attended not; a deep ſigh from the ſtranger had wholly engaged him, and he called out, "What do I ſee? my brother!" The other had fallen dead at his feet. This ſcene filled all but Helena with conſternation; to her it preſented the unhappy Edward Derville, in her deliverer; ſhe could not, though abſorbed in her own afflictions, look upon this ſcene unmoved. The count and lord Charles raiſed the fainting Edward from the floor, while his brother gazed on him in ſpeechleſs ſorrow and ſurpriſe. Helena, addreſſing herſelf to Henry, ſaid, "Is it then to the unfortunate brother of the poor Louiſa, that I owe more than life? Oh Sir! pity and forgive a man whoſe ſufferings may atone for his errors; it is not the ſame Edward

who

who plunged his family in ſuch diſtreſs: affliction has tempered his warmth: let me then reſtore to you a brother, worthy your love and regard? behold, his feelings have deprived him of life." "Think me not ſo ſavage, my dear madam," replied Henry, "to add to woes which are, alas! already too great; no, I call heaven to witneſs how much I pity, and would, if poſſible, reſtore my wretched brother to peace." Edward recovered, and, on ſeeing his brother, a deep confuſion overſpread his face. Henry embraced, "O God!" he exclaimed, "how ill have I deſerved this kindneſs?" "Let us forget our misfortunes," ſaid Henry, "my dear Edward! I rejoice to have found my brother!" Henry Derville wore deep mourning; Edward caſt an expreſſive glance upon it, and ſighed out, "Who beſides the virtuous Alberty, have I doomed to an early grave? has our mother, and the much injured Louiſa paid the debt of nature, ſacrificed by me?" "No," replied Henry, they both live; I wear this habit for Madame de Alberty, from whoſe funeral I was returning, when I met lord Farnham at Paris, the occaſion of my being now here; judge of my aſtoniſhment to behold a man for whom we have mourned many months. Your pardon has been obtained ſome time, and you will not refuſe to go back to D——, to receive our mother's bleſſing." "Will ſhe not rather curſe her guilty ſon?" ſaid Edward, "and how will Louiſa bear the ſight of a wretch who has deprived her of happineſs?" "Louiſa," returned Henry, "is alas! no more herſelf; her ſenſes wander; ſhe is leſs miſerable on that account, your preſence cannot affect her." He could only expreſs his grief by ſighs.

As

As the count and lord Charles were wholly at a loſs to gueſs the meaning of ſuch a ſcene, Helena gave them a ſhort account of the unhappy affair, as related by lord Farnham at D———, when they became known to the Derville family. The meeting of Edward and lady Farnham was then explained to Henry, and this diſcourſe occupied them all till lord Huntley re-entered, and told Helena, that lord Farnham deſired to ſee her directly; ſhe accompanied him to the apartment.

CHAP. LXIII.

IT was lord Huntley's endeavour to ſupport lady Farnham for the interview ſhe was about to undergo; as they paſſed from one room to the other, he aſſured her he had great hopes of lord Farnham's recovery, as his wound was not ſo bad as had at firſt been apprehended. Helena had put the letter, which firſt informed them of what had happened, into her pocket, without knowing that ſhe did ſo; and ſhe had not had time or reſolution to examine the contents, ſhe was therefore ſtill ignorant of the manner in which the count and lord Farnham had met, and alſo of every other circumſtance relative to a rencounter which now threatened her with ſtill greater diſtreſs; it was not however a time to enquire into them, for an univerſal trembling ſeized her as ſhe approached the apartment where ſhe was to behold

hold he. huſband, perhaps on the bed of death: ſhe entered the room and drew near to the bed. Lord Farnham, though weak from loſs of blood, and a removal, which had unavoidably fatigued him, was yet perfectly in his ſenſes. Helena could not repreſs her tears, when ſhe caſt her eyes upon his pale countenance; his eyes, though they had loſt their luſtre, ſtill expreſſed a faint ray of pleaſure as he beheld her, and he feebly exclaimed, "How much have both ſuffered ſince we met! but, amidſt the united pains of mind and body, I ſtill rejoice to ſee you ſafe once more." "It has indeed been a period of exquiſite agony," replied ſhe, "and the ſituation to which you are reduced, is a dreadful aggravation of the miſery I have experienced." The phyſician interpoſed, and ſaid, "that his lordſhip's health required that his ſpirits ſhould not be agitated by any converſation which might intereſt him ſo much as the one they were converſing on." Helena intreated him to attend to advice, and begged all diſcourſe on what had happened might be poſtponed till he was better; his want of ſtrength, rather than inclination, obliged him to acquieſce, and he conſented to remain ſilent on the ſubject for the preſent. She ſtaid with him till his wounds were to be dreſſed, but, on the entrance of the ſurgeon retired, having deſired ſhe might be inſtantly informed of their opinion of her lord: being exceedingly overpowered both in mind and body, ſhe declined returning to her friends, but in her own room indulged herſelf in that grief which lay heavy at her heart; when ſhe had given vent to her feelings in a plentiful ſhower of tears, ſhe recollected the letter which had, though unread,

nearly

nearly deprived her of her ſenſes; ſhe ſought for it, reſolving to ſatisfy herſelf as to the manner in which lord Farnham had diſcovered the count, whom ſhe concluded would not ſeek him.

"My dear Lord,

"Your brother deſires me to relate to you the ſucceſs of our journey, and alſo to appriſe you, that it will be very neceſſary to inform lady Farnham, in the gentleſt manner, of the danger to which lord Farnham is reduced, by wounds occaſioned by a rencounter with the count de Granville. We ſet forward, as we intended, to Paris, and, from deſcription, found lord Farnham had travelled the ſame road before us, on our arrival at the hotel. In this place we ſoon learned that an Engliſh nobleman was then in the houſe; lord Huntley ordered his ſervants to enquire who it was—it was lord Farnham—My friend then ſent a note to his lordſhip, which he anſwered in perſon, and made a thouſand anxious enquiries about his lady: when he was ſatisfied that ſhe was ſafe, and underſtood that it was at her requeſt that lord Huntley was then in Paris, in order to find him out, he expreſſed his acknowledgments with much warmth, and begged that Huntley would do him the favor of accompanying him in ſearch of the count, in caſe he did not come to Paris. He had already left a letter for him at his own houſe, ſince which he waited with much impatience for an anſwer; he had poſted one of his ſervants to watch the count's return; and ſaid that he had not been able to determine, ſuch had been the perturbation of his mind, whether

ther to quit Paris, in the hope of a more ſpeedy meeting with the count de Granville, or whether to remain in it: he was deliberating and weighing the matter with himſelf when we ſent to him. Both Huntley and myſelf adviſed his continuance in Paris, as the moſt likely place to find the count in at laſt: it was impoſſible to perſuade a man in his circumſtances to ſubmit quietly to ſuch injuries as had been offered him, in the perſon of lady Farnham; and indeed his friends could not wiſh he ſhould allow them to be unreſented: but had we been ſo inclined, his lordſhip's temper does not appear of that pliant kind to be guided by the advice and opinion of others. His anxiety and the diſturbance of his mind, which was viſibly very great, continued for ſome hours; we could neither be ſurpriſed at it, nor could we leſſen it. The reaſonable temper and placid mind of my friend was warmed into reſentment, and I am certain he would have revenged his ſiſter's wrongs, if lord Farnham had not intended it: ſuch indignities offered to the moſt amiable of women, are of a nature that call aloud for puniſhment; and as lord Huntley repeated how much ſhe had ſuffered, lord Farnham had ſome difficulty in keeping his rage within bounds, till the time ſhould arrive when he might gratify it in another way; his blood boiled, and an angry emotion ſhook his frame: had he always had ſo juſt a cauſe for exerciſing the violent warmth of his diſpoſition, it would have been improper to have called the goodneſs of it in queſtion; but, when I reflect that the woman for whoſe ſake he now endures both in mind and body very materially, has too often been the victim of his unbounded fury, I feel leſs

inclined to compaſſionate his ſituation. While we ſat together, expecting an anſwer to his lordſhip's letter every moment, I could not avoid contemplating the unequal qualities and virtues of the two men, who had equally paid that tribute ſo juſtly due to the uncommon charms and endowments of the lovely Helena; for not all that the moſt partial deſcription had painted her, could raiſe my ideas to a level with the perfections which ſhine around her, and adorn every look and action of the beauteous original. I hope lord Farnham will, if he recovers, which I fear is very doubtful, evince himſelf worthy to poſſeſs the bleſſings which heaven has beſtowed on him: this diſtreſs may not be thrown away on him, it may ſerve to correct thoſe ſallies of paſſion which have endangered the life, and muſt deſtroy the happineſs of lady Farnham, and all connected with her. After waiting for ſome time lord Farnham's ſervant returned from his poſt, and ſaid the count was juſt arrived. In leſs than half an hour a note was delivered to his lordſhip; the contents ſuch as might be expected from a man deſtitute of every kind of honor and humanity, but that falſe one of defending an unworthy action, at the hazard of his own life, and that of the friend he had ſo groſsly injured. The next morning was appointed for their meeting; and in the intermediate time lord Farnham made ſome ſmall arrangement in his affairs, delivering ſome papers to lord Huntley in caſe he ſhould fall. They met, and, after firing ſeveral times, lord Farnham received a wound in his ſide, which the ſurgeon we had taken with us pronounced to be dangerous. The count, I believe, was ſlightly hurt.

We

We left him to the care of his friend, and conveyed lord Farnham back to the hotel. The affair was kept quite ſecret, none but the parties concerned having any idea of what was going forward. When his lordſhip came to himſelf he inſiſted on being inſtantly carried to the chateau de Granville. Lord Huntley propoſed ſending for lady Farnham, as the fatigue of a journey might be fatal to him; but he perſiſted in declaring he would go to her. I much fear this obſtinacy will be of bad conſequence; but it is as dangerous to oppoſe him: the ſurgeon has agreed to attend him in a carriage proper for his ſituation, and we hope to prevail on his lordſhip to defer ſetting out for another day. We have with us a gentleman who, by accident, heard of lord Farnham's being in Paris, from one of the ſervants whom he met; he is an acquaintance of his lordſhip's, and ſeems much intereſted in his recovery; he alſo has promiſed to attend him to the chateau, and by the time you receive this letter I ſuppoſe we ſhall be on the road. You may aſſure lady Farnham that no care or attention ſhall be omitted to convey his lordſhip with as little injury as poſſible to his health; but I cannot flatter you that he will receive none. Lord Huntley, who has a thouſand fears on his ſiſter's account, which he cannot repreſs, is yet convinced nothing on your part will be wanting to render her condition as little diſtreſſing as the circumſtances will admit. 'Tis the buſineſs of friendſhip and affection, like his and yours, my lord, to alleviate the many evils that ſurround that truly amiable woman; ſhe has already experienced too many. 'Tis the earneſt wiſh of her brother, in which,

which, though but a ſtranger to her, I may be allowed to join, that the remainder may be free from the tumultuous attacks which, though ſo delicate, ſhe has nobly ſuſtained. I grieve to be the reciter of ſuch unwelcome tidings, but they muſt be known. We all very truly ſympathize in the misfortunes of your amiable ſiſter, and none more ſincerely than,

My dear lord,
Your very faithful friend,
FERDINAND ADOLPHUS,
Count of St. Clare.

CHAP. LXIV.

WHEN Helena had made an end of the count's letter, ſhe naturally paid the tribute of grateful praiſe for his generous attention to her welfare. She flattered herſelf lord Farnham would yet recover; for, though ſhe could not deceive herſelf into that warmth of affection for him, ſhe had ever, till her marriage, hoped to feel for the man to whom ſhe gave her hand; and though it was impoſſible for her not to retain too tender a remembrance of that ſentiment ſhe had innocently encouraged for lord Huntley, neither could ſhe always avoid making a compariſon between the two men; yet the rectitude of her principles, and the purity of her mind, taught her to baniſh every idea that might leſſen the

the regard ſhe wiſhed to feel for her huſband, and reduce the affection ſhe had nouriſhed for her brother to the level of virtue and honor; ſhe had gained much by her efforts, lord Farnham's tenderneſs had not been loſt upon her, though her regard for him was ſtill mixed with a fear ſhe wiſhed to conquer, but which depended greatly on himſelf; and, now that ſhe felt herſelf the cauſe of his illneſs, her anxiety redoubled on his account, and ſhe reſolved that nothing in her power ſhould be wanting to aid his reſtoration: her own griefs ſhe ſcorned to indulge to a degree which might weaken her powers of acting, nor would ſhe ſuffer the natural ſenſibility of her temper to get the better of her, when ſhe was called upon by either duty or friendſhip to devote her time and thoughts to alleviate the miſeries of another, particularly when that other, by the moſt ſacred claim, demanded all her exertions to relieve him: for this purpoſe, regardleſs of her own health, ſhe reſolved to ſpend all her time in lord Farnham's apartment, and to be herſelf his nurſe. She now only waited for a ſummons, which ſhe had ordered as ſoon as the ſurgeon withdrew. When her mind was a little more compoſed about the ſtate of her huſband, her thoughts fell on the loſs ſhe had ſuſtained, and in ſome meaſure occaſioned, by the death of the counteſs, ſhe roſe and reſolved to take another look at the lifeleſs remains of that amiable, unfortunate woman; ſhe ſtole gently to the room where the body lay—it was a ſolemn ſcene—the wax tapers caſt a gloomy light on the enſign of death; the room was hung with black, and in the middle was the coffin which

which contained the mortal part of her much valued friend. Helena approached nearer; ſhe raiſed the coffin lid; a ſweet ſmile was ſpread over the features of the now inanimate Matilda, which ſeemed to indicate her bliſs. The tear of ſenſibility fell from the eyes of Helena on the palid cheek of the counteſs, as ſhe bent over her. "Dear ſenſibility! thou ſource inexhauſted of all that's precious in our joys, or coſtly in our ſorrows: eternal fountain of our feelings, 'tis in ſcenes like theſe we may without a crime indulge thee. Hail! to thee, then, thou gentle and benevolent ſpirit, whoſe ſubtile eſſence pervades the human breaſt, whoſe emotions heighten the generous enjoyment of the youthful heart, rouſe each better quality, and ſoften the rigid voice of juſtice. Thou haſt often enlivened the benign features of heaven-born charity; thou haſt aſſiſted her to raiſe the drooping head of wan deſpair; to bind up the wounds inflicted by pride; to pour the healing balm of ſympathy into the over-fraught heart. Thou haſt cauſed the tears of genuine pity to fall like wine and oil into the boſom of the unfortunate: thou haſt huſhed each ſtrong paſſion, ſoothed the weary ſoul, and lightened the woes attendant on this mortal pilgrimage: thou art the companion of virtue, of honor, and of truth: 'tis thine to give freſh luſtre to the emblematic hue of innocence; to touch with ſkilful hand the glowing beauties of the roſe, and make it ever bloom upon the cheek; 'tis thine to impart ſenſations to the human breaſt which gold can never purchaſe, without which pleaſure muſt cloy, titles loſe their value, and life become a cold unintereſting

intereſting journey, but thou canſt convey warmth to the world and luſtre to the day; and ſhall a commerce with that world deſtroy and ruin thee? muſt thy fair form wither at the chilling touch of unfeeling avarice? and art thou ordained to periſh if gazed upon by vulgar eyes? thou wilt ſhrink from noiſy ignorance, nor deign to detect that offspring of art and affectation which has uſurped thy name; but whoſe deformity cannot be concealed, if ever aſſailed by the melting note of ſorrow, the piercing ſhriek of anguiſh; it turns with cold diſguſt from all miſery but its own; its hand is cloſed by the narrow maxims of worldly wiſdom, and the ſoul-ſubduing voice of pity cannot awaken one gentle generous emotion: not ſuch Helena, for ſhe poſſeſſes thy animating flame; 'twas hers to chear misfortune, and to feel for others woes; ſhe wept in all the luxury of grief."

CHAP. LXV.

SHE gazed upon the awful receptacle of death, and all the active faculties of her ſoul were ſuſpended in ſilent woe; her own misfortunes were forgotten in the mournful contemplation of the ſcene before her. Thus buried in profound and ſorrowful meditation on the untimely fate of her friend, ſhe continued ſome minutes, when, raiſing her eyes, ſhe beheld the count de Granville

ville ſtanding before her: a loud ſhriek announced her terror and ſurpriſe; fear rendered her motionleſs; the candle fell from her nerveleſs hand, and ſhe ſighed out while her lips quivered as ſhe uttered, "Oh God preſerve me!" Her ſenſes were only kept awake by the count's falling at her feet, and, in a voice of agony, beſeeching her not to be alarmed. "I come not," ſaid he, "moſt injured of women, to offer you further inſults, but to die before you; to waſh out with my own blood, the guilt I have committed againſt your peace; to expiate in ſome degree, by my death, the crimes I have ſo often repeated, and the miſery I have occaſioned." Horror had kept Helena ſilent while he ſpoke; but, when ſhe ſaw him draw a dagger from his breaſt, with an intention, in all the wildneſs of deſpair, to plunge it into his heart, ſhe ſeized his arm with renewed ſtrength, and cried out, "Forbear, my lord! nor dare to ruſh into the preſence of a juſtly offended God, till his Almighty will ſhall ordain the time, and demand a life over which you have no power, and have no right to deſtroy: behold," ſaid ſhe, turning to the lifeleſs form of the counteſs, "behold the heavenly ſerenity that ſits on the pale countenance of your angelic wife; let not the prayers ſhe offered up for your repentance be unavailing! remember your children! and think upon the miſeries that await thoſe who reject the mercy of heaven." Animated by the ſubject, ſhe forgot her own fears; and, with a peculiar energy, enforced her admonition. The count roſe and exclaimed, "The voice of truth and virtue has prevailed: and can you pardon my madneſs, in attempting to make

you

you witneſs of an act I now look back on with dread, and from which you alone have preſerved me? yes," continued he, after a momentary pauſe, "I will live, though to be a wanderer, an outcaſt from ſociety; for I have forfeited all title to honor and confidence: I have murdered this faithful, patient ſufferer! look down, oh thou bleſſed ſpirit, and behold the anguiſh of my ſoul! and how gladly I would atone for all the wrongs I have heaped upon thee—but how ſhall I deprecate your juſt abhorrence and reſentment? oh lady Farnham! can you, with compaſſion, look on the villain who has injured you, I fear, beyond repair? not content with offering you the moſt brutal inſults, but I have murdered your huſband: him whom ſo late I ſtiled friend!" Helena was overcome; and, with whatever diſguſt ſhe might conſider his crimes, her nature was too gentle to inſult his miſeries; ſhe wept as he uttered his complaints and accuſations againſt himſelf; but it was impoſſible for her to ſpeak from emotion. "Go," continued the count, "go from a ſcene of ſolemn horror, a ſcene that harrows up my guilty ſoul; retire to one more ſuited to innocence and gentleneſs like yours; and compoſe, if poſſible, your agitated ſpirits, and leave me to mourn, eternally to mourn over this ſilent monitor! whoſe voice muſt never again ſpeak peace to my tortured ſoul. Fear nothing from me, for worlds I would not now ſully a purity ſo angelic; ever ſacred be your virtues!——here will I watch the cold remains of my Matilda, till they are quietly depoſited in the tomb; over her pale corſe will I ſhed the bitter tears of repentant ſorrow, and pray her ſoul's ſpeedy paſſage to the realms of bliſs." There

was

was a ſolemn gravity in his manner; a fixed melancholy on his pale and haggard countenance, that beſpoke his inward ſufferings more than words could expreſs; and which convinced Helena of his ſincerity. She took up the light, and once more approached the coffin, "Farewel," ſhe cried in a broken voice, "farewel for ever, thou much regretted, but unhappy friend! if thou art conſcious of what paſſes here now, rejoice that providence has thought fit, by any means, to awaken his mind, for whom thy anxious moments were imbittered, to a ſenſe of his danger; and alſo, behold the ſincerity of my ſorrow and regard;" then turning to the count ſhe ſaid, "perſiſt, my lord, in your good intentions, and be happy.

CHAP. LXVI.

WHEN Helena left the room where ſhe had encountered ſo unexpectedly the moſt dreaded of her enemies, whom ſhe quitted in a very different frame of mind than ſhe could even have hoped, ſhe ſought her friends, to whom ſhe recounted all that had paſſed between the count and herſelf. Lord Huntley concurred with her in wiſhing a continuance of this favorable diſpoſition in one who had much to repent of. The newly reſtored brothers were much moved at the recital of his agonies; in one, it revived with freſh force, the

the memory of his own unhappy violence, and in the other, a painful recollection of the woes it had occaſioned. The count de St. Clare and lord Charles could not help obſerving, that ſuch guilt deſerved a very ſevere puniſhment, as its effects muſt ever be felt by the highly injured; but, though they both warmly execrated his paſt conduct, both were too generous to form a wiſh for the augmentation of his miſeries; Helena, with all the genuine ſoftneſs of humanity, was ſo far from deſiring to encreaſe the unhappy ſituation of the count's mind, that ſhe breathed a pious prayer to heaven that he might never again loſe ſight of that path, which would, in the end, conduct him to peace; and, as good is ſometimes extracted from evil, ſhe entertained a hope that lord Farnham's illneſs might make ſuch an alteration in his mind and temper, as would render him an ornament rather than a diſgrace to his rank and ſociety. "I ſhall then," ſaid ſhe, "have reaſon to rejoice in tranſitory misfortunes, and thankfully acknowledge the goodneſs of the great author of all things, for his mercies to me." In this pleaſing and conſolatory hope, ſhe was ſtrengthened by lord Huntley, who expreſſed the moſt flattering expectations from lord Farnham's recovery. Helena waited till a ſervant informed her that his lord deſired to ſee her, ſhe then wiſhed the gentlemen good night, and repaired to his apartment. His wounds, ſhe was told, were in a leſs dangerous ſtate, but his fever had rather increaſed, and he was more reſtleſs and uneaſy; her preſence, however, ſeemed to alleviate his pains; ſhe ſat down by him, and with her own hand prepared and gave him whatever he was ordered to take;

he ſpoke little, for indeed he was weak and low, but he lay with his eyes fixed on Helena, and her hand in his; he paſſed a diſturbed and tedious night, during which ſhe never left him, and next day only retired whilſt the ſurgeon was with him. A very ſhort ſleep, which fatigue made it impoſſible to reſiſt, ſerved to ſupport her till the next night, when lord Farnham was ſo much more compoſed as to doſe for ſome hours, then both lord Huntley and lord Charles, inſiſted on Helena going to bed; ſhe conſented, having obtained a promiſe that they would have her called if the ſmalleſt alteration appeared, or lord Farnham expreſſed a wiſh to have her with him a moment ſooner than ſhe awoke. Before morning ſhe was accordingly ſummoned, for his lordſhip had waked out of an uneaſy ſleep, much worſe than when ſhe left him; ſhe hurried on her clothes and attended him; his fever had gained upon him, and he was not perfectly himſelf, though the delirium was not very violent. Helena was the only perſon he could recollect, and when ſhe approached the bed he ſeized her arm and cried out. "The villain ſhall not tear her from me; his life ſhall pay for the intended outrage:" then exhauſted, he feebly exclaimed, "Oh! where have I been, Helena? I thought you were gone for ever from me; the ſcene was dark and hideous, and my ſoul could find no reſt—Oh mercy!" he ſighed out, and his ſenſes quite forſook him. Helena, beyond meaſure terrified at his words, and the horror of his looks, trembled as ſhe gazed upon him, but when ſhe ſaw him ſink down without life, ſhe uttered a faint ſcream, and became nearly as inſenſible as her huſband, whom ſhe thought was gone

for

for ever. They forced her out of the room, while the phyſician, who was preſent, took proper means to bring his patient to himſelf; it was not long before they convinced Helena, that what ſhe had taken for death, was only a fainting fit occaſioned by a too great exertion; by degrees ſhe became more compoſed, and returned to the room. Lord Farnham lay in a ſtate of ſtupefaction for the remainder of that day and night, and very little hope was entertained of his recovery; nothing could draw Helena from his bed-ſide, though ſhe had not the power of adminiſtering the ſmalleſt eaſe or ſatisfaction to him; ſhe ſat weeping over the fate of a man, whoſe conduct in general and towards her in particular, had not entitled him to the unfeigned ſorrow ſhe feelingly expreſſed at his dangerous ſituation; but, to a mind well regulated as hers, it was ſufficient to behold him oppreſſed, to baniſh all memory of paſſed wrongs.

CHAP. LXVII.

CONTRARY to the expectations of the phyſician, on the morning of the third day lord Farnham recovered from the ſtupor which had ſuſpended all ſenſe and motion; there was little remains of the fever, and his wounds were in a fair way of being effectually healed, but his weakneſs had increaſed with the return of his intellects;

it was now the time for the attentive tenderneſs of his wife to exert itſelf, and ſhe left nothing undone which might in any degree contribute to his recovery; his illneſs had rendered him rather fretful, which ſhe ſoothed by the mildeſt returns of careful affection; he could not bear her a moment from his ſight, and it was not till quite exhauſted with conſtant watching and fatigue, that he could be prevailed on to admit a ſervant to adminiſter his medicines and wait upon him, and ſuffer Helena to take ſome repoſe in another room. It was evening when ſhe left his apartment to retire to her own. In croſſing the gallery ſhe met the funeral pomp, which was intended to pay a reſpect to the memory of one, whoſe eaſe when living, had been diſregarded: the attendants were moving ſlowly along with the coffin; ſhe ſtopped to let them paſs; when, behold at the head, clad in all the ſemblance of real grief, was the count with a child in each hand, who were kept ſilent by fear. The proceſſion paſſed ſilently on, while Helena, almoſt inured to ſcenes of horror and diſtreſs, ſtood with her eyes fixed on this mournful pageantry as it deſcended to convey its object to the laſt abode on earth, ſhe then retired to her room, and, overcome by fatigue and a variety of ſenſations, ſhe experienced for ſome hours the ſoft influence of that kind friend to the weary and unfortunate, who ſhed over her a calm ſuſpenſion of every anxious thought on worldly care. She found lord Farnham much better for a quiet night, and Julia, who had deſired to be left to indulge her griefs alone, now appeared once more amongſt the family; her meeting with Helena was very melancholy on both

ſides,

ſides, and it was ſome time ere either could find words to expreſs their ſorrow in. They were alone together when a ſervant delivered a letter to Helena; it was from the count de Granville. Julia with ſome warmth ſpoke of his crimes, and conſidered him as the murderer of her dear ſiſter: "His repentance," ſaid ſhe, "is too late; he ſhould have found out, before ſhe was no more, that the ill-fated Matilda deſerved his eſteem and affection. You, lady Farnham, may forgive him, though you have ſuffered much, yet all may yet be well; for me I muſt ever look with abhorrence on a man who has deprived his children and me of our only ſupport.

CHAP. LXVIII.

"MY dear friend," replied Helena, taking the hand of Julia, "while we muſt ever condemn vice, and deplore the fatal effects of it, let us not forget that we all ſtand in need of much lenity, if our faults are to be forgiven: ſhall we not then forgive and pity the heart oppreſſed with a ſenſe of its own unworthineſs, ſinking under the weight of evils ſelf-created, but happily touched with compunction? Your angelic ſiſter prayed in her laſt moments for her deſtroyer, and ſhall not we, who have experienced ſmaller evils, and have had ſo bright an example ſet us, ſhall not

not we copy as far as we are able? Do, my love, ſee this unhappy brother, and ſooth, by your forgiveneſs, the torture of his mind: I know you will rejoice at his repentance, for with Julia I am convinced that reſentment is a ſhort-lived paſſion; but pity ſhall ever dwell with you:" ſhe then opened the letter and read as follows:

"Madam,

"TO you who can forgive and pity, whoſe ſoul is ſo nearly allied to the perfections of the heavenly inhabitants, and whoſe heart is formed to ſympathiſe in the miſeries of all around you, I, though the guilty author of ſo many calamities, preſume to approach once more in an humble addreſs, truſting to that virtuous ſenſibility which gives a charm to all your actions. To-morrow I ſhall for ever quit a ſcene that reminds me of my crimes and misfortunes, the once peaceful dwelling of my honored anceſtors, whoſe name I have ſullied, and branded with foul diſgrace. I ſhall leave the world, and all its dazzling gaieties, and in the melancholy habitation of ſilence and penitence, amongſt men who endeavour, by the ſevereſt mortification, to expiate a life of wickedneſs, learn to forget I once poſſeſſed the greateſt bleſſings heavens beſtows on a favored mortal: a faithful affectionate wife, and children who promiſe to be all a fond parent could deſire; the firſt I have doomed to an early grave, the ſecond I commit to the protection of lord Farnham and yourſelf, if for the ſake of their mother you will undertake the charge. You will not, I am ſure you will not, let the crimes of the father injure the innocent offspring of two people who will quickly

quickly be equally dead to the world. Tell lord Farnham I confeſs the injuries I have done him with the utmoſt contrition and remorſe, and would, if it were in my power, make him every reparation the moſt rigid juſtice could demand; I rejoice, however, that his recovery is no longer doubtful, for his own ſake; and let him know from one made wiſe by experience, that a friendſhip whoſe foundation is vice cannot exiſt long, ſuch a bond is no ſecurity againſt temptation: but tell him that a timely reflection, on paſt errors, may preſerve him from future miſery; and that, ſince heaven has given him the beſt and faireſt of its works, to aid his good reſolutions and lead him to eternal happineſs, it is the requeſt of a man who is concerned for his welfare, that he will not neglect the offered bounty; intreat him not to curſe his wretched friend, nor purſue with reſentment the moſt undone of all mankind. My ſteward, if you will condeſcend to admit him, will receive any orders lord Farnham and you will honor him with, relative to the poor orphans to whom I truſt you will be guardians. My affairs are ſo ſettled as to give as little trouble to you as poſſible. May the great God of heaven bleſs and preſerve you both. In you lord Farnham may be, muſt be happy, for you are an angel whom in death only I ſhall ceaſe to adore and reſpect.

GRANVILLE."

CHAP.

CHAP. LXIX.

WHEN Helena had read this letter, over which ſhe ſhed tears of ſenſibility and compaſſion, ſhe deſired Julia to peruſe it; who, when ſhe had done, returned it, ſaying "She was aſhamed of having ſhewed ſuch a very implacable temper; but," ſaid ſhe, ſighing, "when I thought on a beloved ſiſter's misfortunes, I could not help feeling indignation and hatred for the author of them. Your conduct ſhall be my guide, for it is ever noble, conſiſtent and juſt. I will go then and take leave of my unhappy brother." Helena and Julia ſeparated, the one in ſearch of the count, the other to attend her huſband, whom ſhe found ſo much recovered, that, willing to afford the count every conſolation in her power, ſhe determined to ſhew his letter to his once dear friend, and, if poſſible, procure his conſent to join his name with her own in every aſſurance of pardon, and good wiſhes for a return of his peace of mind; ſhe alſo flattered herſelf that, as they had been companions in wickedneſs, it might have no bad effect to convince Lord Farnham that the count felt all the agonies of remorſe for the paſt actions of his life; ſhe hoped it would ſerve to impreſs him with a ſerious concern for himſelf, and his own eternal welfare, which ſhe had too much reaſon to fear had ſeldom been the ſubject of his thoughts: ſhe conſidered it as her

her duty to awaken in him a real ſenſe of religion, and if poſſible direct his attention to that important and only ſtable foundation of all our hopes and wiſhes. On her firſt mention of having received a letter from a man who had dared to inſult her in ſo infamous a manner, lord Farnham's face betrayed an angry glow of reſentment; but Helena was not diſcouraged, ſhe intreated his patient attention while ſhe read the contents to him: at firſt he unwillingly conſented, but as ſhe proceeded his countenance aſſumed a dejected melancholy, and, when ſhe read the particular admonition to himſelf, he exclaimed: "I am, indeed, convinced that vice can have no laſting friends, 'tis a proſtitution of the ſacred flame of friendſhip, which can only dwell with ſecurity in virtuous minds, not with ſuch men as Granville and myſelf; may his repentance be ſincere, and peace once more illuminate his ſoul. You may," continued he, "tell him I forgive him, though he has greatly injured me." With this permiſſion Helena ſat down to anſwer the count's letter, and preſently after read the following note to lord Farnham, deſiring his opinion and approbation of it:

"My Lord,

"I moſt willingly undertake to convey to you, along with my own, lord Farnham's ſincere and hearty forgiveneſs for any injuries offered us, and to aſſure you, that, whatever plan of life you may adopt, our beſt wiſhes for a reſtoration of your tranquility ſhall ever

attend you. The important truſt bequeathed to lord Farnham and myſelf ſhall be moſt religiouſly attended to, to the utmoſt of our power: we will, my lord, alone remember that the father of the dear children was unfortunate, and, with the moſt lively concern for his ſufferings, endeavour to guard them from every evil: the memory of their amiable mother ſhall animate me to perform the duty of a parent to your beauteous offspring, and lord Farnham commiſſions me to aſſure you, that every arrangement you think proper to make ſhall be faithfully adhered to: and now, my lord, with the kindeſt and moſt ſincere prayers for your future peace, we warmly and earneſtly join; may the remainder of your life paſs ſmoothly on, uninterrupted by any tumultuous and deſtructive events; but in the calm ſociety of good and religious men may you learn to forget all your ſorrows, to conſider us only as your friends; and, after years of pious ſerenity, may you quit this ſcene in the joyful expectation of a bliſsful immortality. Adieu: believe us both intereſted in your happineſs, and accept, with theſe of lord Farnham, the beſt wiſhes of

H. F."

CHAP.

CHAP. LXX.

THE letter being approved, it was immediately ſent; and Helena, perceiving that lord Farnham ſeemed inclined to ſleep, left the room to prevent his talking to her. She met Julia in the drawing-room, who was overwhelmed with tears and diſtreſs; ſhe was juſt come from the count: "Ah!" cried ſhe, "what an interview have I had, and how changed is the once gay and thoughtleſs count de Granville! his emaciated figure and pale countenance ſpoke the anguiſh of his heart, and excited my pity: he took my hand, and addreſſed me in a mourful tone of voice; "This night," ſaid he, "is the laſt I ſhall paſs under this roof; and this is the laſt time we ſhall ever meet, Julia: it is kind in you then to ſeek the wretched, and ever will I remember it with gratitude." "I could not anſwer him for weeping: he proceeded to ſay much of his wickedneſs, to intreat my forgiveneſs for his crimes towards my dear ſiſter, and to lament his own depravity: when, juſt as I was about to leave him, your letter was delivered:" "Stay another moment," ſaid he, "perhaps I may charge you with ſome ananſwer to this." "His tears fell on the paper as he read, and when he had finiſhed, he put it into my hand, and bid me adore the virtues which had reſtored him to reaſon."—"Tell her," ſaid he, "tell that angel," and he

he laid his hand on mine, almoſt overcome by his own emotions, "that I fear ſhe is too good to be long an inhabitant of this bad world, unleſs, indeed, her bright example ſhall reform it: ſay to her that my ſoul will bleſs her, and my laſt ſigh expire in a prayer for her felicity. To lord Farnham commend the man he once called friend, but who deſerved not the title: my children will, I hope, live to reward the anxious tenderneſs of their good friend; let them be directed in all things by lady Farnham. Adieu, Julia," continued he, "heaven bleſs you! let this embrace," taking me in his arms, "ſeal my pardon: pray for the unhappy, in which number I ſhall ever be found." "I pity him from my heart," ſaid Helena, "and wiſh it was in in my power to alleviate his miſeries; but time alone muſt do that."

Lord Farnham now deſired to be introduced to the deliverer of his Helena; lord Huntley conducted Monſ. Derville to his apartment, where he received the earneſt thanks and acknowledgments of the grateful huſband of her whom he had ſo generouſly expoſed himſelf to preſerve. The whole party now began to ſit ſome hours every day with his lordſhip, who daily recovered: and Julia found in the company and converſation of Henry Derville, a happy relief from the ſorrow that had preyed on her. It was ſeveral weeks ere lord Farnham was able to think of reviſiting England, though he began to be impatient ſo to do; but the unwearied attention and tenderneſs of Helena made him amends for a painful

ful illneſs, and a tedious confinement; and the great alteration in his ſentiments was to Helena a ſufficient recompenſe for whatever ſhe had ſuffered on his account; the proſpect before her was conſiderably enlivened, and promiſed years of ſolid peace and tranquility, bating the fortuitous evils of life. The ill-founded jealouſy lord Farnham had entertained of lord Huntley was now entirely cured by a more intimate knowledge of his character; he found him ready to relinquiſh all ſelfiſh conſiderations when the happineſs of his friends was at all concerned. He ſoon learned that his mind was the ſeat of every manly and benevolent virtue, and that the plaſtic hand of nature had not only moulded his perſon into the moſt captivating form, but had fitted all the qualities of his ſoul to inhabit the fair reſemblance of perfection: he ceaſed to wonder at the attachment that had ſubſiſted between two people ſo equally endowed; and he owned his obligations to heaven were of no common ſort, in having ſelected him, from a number of more deſerving men, to be the happy huſband of the virtuous Helena, whom he reſolved to make the model of his own actions, and to preſerve, as far as depended on him, from every misfortune.

CHAP.

CHAP. LXXI.

THE count's ſteward, who had accompanied his lord when he left the chateau, ſoon returned, to give lord Farnham an account of all the affairs relative to his wards. His requeſt to be admitted to the preſence of lord and lady Farnham, was inſtantly granted: this man was an old and faithful domeſtic, who had been attached, by all the ties of gratitude and affection, to the family for many years. The counteſs had depended on his fidelity, and had not been diſappointed, and the count truſted him with all his money concerns: he had long known and inwardly lamented that depravity in his lord's conduct, which threatened the family with deſtruction. As he entered the room a tear fell from his eye: "I come, my lord," ſaid he, addreſſing himſelf to lord Farnham, "to inform you of the affairs committed to my charge, for which, in future, I am to account to your lordſhip, and to receive your orders." "Where have you left the count?" ſaid lord Farnham. "I attended my lord," continued the old man, "to Paris:" "I go," ſaid he, "to warn my unhappy ſiſter of the danger ſhe is in, and if poſſible to prevail upon her to quit the path ſhe has too long trod, and like me to beg ſhe will retire from the world; but, if ſhe is bent on purſuing the road that leads to deſtruction, I think it is my duty to oblige her

her to forſake a dangerous world: I mean to place her in a convent, and then retire into one myſelf." "We found Mademoiſelle Granville ſurrounded by a ſet of people not likely to improve her morals or mend her heart. My lord, her brother, left nothing unſaid to awaken her mind from its ſtate of wickedneſs, but in vain; ſhe laughed at his remorſe, and treated his deſire to place her in a convent with the utmoſt contempt. Finding nothing would do but a reſiſtleſs authority, he then procured an order from the miniſter for her confinement, which he inſtantly put in execution. When my young lady found there was no eſcape, ſhe raved and tore her hair, accuſing my lord of cruelty and injuſtice, but was at length conveyed to the convent, and delivered to the lady abbeſs, with every charge to treat her kindly, and make her ſituation as agreeable as it would admit; for which purpoſe my lord left a large ſum of money to enforce his injunction: he embraced her, and, with many affectionate expreſſions, aſſured her that he was actuated by motives of real regard for her happineſs, and that one day ſhe would be convinced of the truth of his affection: ſhe ſhewed only reſentment, and we left her. My lord then finiſhed ſome buſineſs which detained him ſome days in Paris; and, taking his final leave of the world, I followed him to the convent of La Drupe, where I ſaw him put on the habit of the order: he condeſcended to embrace his old ſervant, and ordered me to return to the chateau, and acquaint his friends, whoſe hearts are formed to feel

for

for the miſeries of others, that the laſt words he ſhall be admitted to utter, ſhall bleſs them all: he bleſſed his children alſo, and bid me commend them to you, my lord, and to lady Farnham. I threw myſelf on the ground where I continued to mourn the loſs I had ſuſtained, till I was warned to depart; and here, my lord, are the papers containing my directions." Lord Farnham examined the contents, and then returned them, deſiring the old man would ſtill continue to act as he had done, and inform him of his proceedings from time to time: he paid him a compliment on his fidelity, and diſmiſſed him. This buſineſs ſettled, it now only remained for the whole party to move from the chateau. Julia had conſented to accompany her friends to England for ſome months, to which place ſhe had not forbid Henry Derville following her. The children were to go along with them alſo; and they all agreed to ſpend a few days with madame Derville, to whom Helena could preſent her eldeſt ſon, under much more favorable circumſtances than any other perſon; ſhe having experienced that virtue was the moſt predominant quality of his ſoul, though he had once ſo fatally given way to a violent ſally of his temper; of theſe deſtructive paſſions he now ſeemed perfectly cured.

CHAP.

CHAP. LXXII.

WHEN every neceſſary precaution had been taken, they ſet forward on their journey; lord Farnham, Helena, Julia and Henry Derville in one carriage; lord Huntley, the count de St. Clare, lord Charles, and the unhappy Edward in the other, which were followed by the ſervants and children. Madame Derville was apprized of their approach, as were alſo their friends in England, who had been punctually informed of all that had happened, and impatiently expected their arrival.

As they drew near to the native village where the unfortunate Edward had ſpent the happy years of infancy, and, where alas, he had been the principal actor in a fatal tragedy, his companions found it difficult to inſpire him with reſolution to face his mother, and to behold the poor wandering Louiſa, by him reduced to wretched inſenſibility; his agitation became extreme, when he diſcovered the ſcene where he had trampled on every law divine and human, forgot the ties of nature and became a ſavage; as the carriage reached the door, he grew ſick and unable to move; he breathed ſhort, and looked around him with terror painted on his pale face: lord Charles, who was with him, tried every method to ſupport him; at length he got him into the houſe: his mother,

mother, who expected him, came forward to embrace him, but he ſhrunk from her arms on the ground, and hid his face in her gown. The good lady, in whom the affection of a parent yet exiſted towards her ill-fated ſon, aſſured him of her forgiveneſs, and would, if poſſible, have raiſed him up; but it was ſome time ere he could be prevailed on to look at her, and when he did, he expreſſed ſo much ſorrow and remorſe for his paſt conduct, that, had ſhe been reſolved before he came to diſown and reject, ſhe could not have withſtood his melting addreſs. When he could command his feelings a little, he enquired for Louiſa; Madame Derville ſaid, with much tenderneſs, "ſhe thought for both their ſakes, it was better to defer a meeting at preſent, as ſhe could not be certain her Louiſa might bear it, if ſhe recollected her brother." He ſighed heavily, and replied—"She muſt be blaſted at the ſight of one who has rendered her for ever an object of deſpair and ſorrow; I will not ſee her if you think ſhe is likely to ſuffer from it." Madame Derville was now introduced to thoſe of the party ſhe had never before ſeen, and particularly to Julia, of whom her younger ſon had ſpoken much in his letters to her; and, from all ſhe could learn, ſhe was well pleaſed to believe ſhe beheld her future daughter in an engaging amiable woman, and ſhe was thankful to heaven which yet gave her a proſpect of ſeeing one of her children happy at leaſt. They parted early, after having ſpent the afternoon in ſenſible, though not lively converſation. Lord Farnham was yet weak and unable to bear much fatigue; and the misfortunes which had befallen

fallen each party had rendered them all grave for that time.

The next morning when they were all aſſembled, Louiſa entered the room; the firſt perſon ſhe took notice of was Helena; ſhe approached her, threw her arms round her neck, and ſaid—"Are you come again? where have you been been ſince I firſt ſaw and loved you?" then pauſing, ſhe took the ſame little picture from her boſom, and gazing on it exclaimed, "Love, did I ſay? no, that is impoſſible! I loved but once, and it was Auguſtus—now my boſom is quite cold; but yet you looked ſo ſweetly on me, and wept for my misfortunes, that I ſought you round the fields and gardens, but you were as unkind as my dear Auguſtus, you fled from me." Edward could not bear it; he was riſing haſtily to leave the room, when the noiſe he made rouſed the attention of Louiſa, who turned quick towards him, uttered a piercing ſcream and fell lifeleſs into Helena's arms: all was now confuſion; Edward became frantic, and Louiſa appeared dead; ſhe was carried up to her room, when Helena and Julia accompanied her, while the gentlemen were endeavouring to calm the miſerable Edward.

CHAP.

CHAP. LXXIII.

IT was ſome hours before the poor Louiſa ceaſed to go from one fit to another, and, when ſhe did, her ſtrength and ſpirits were ſo much exhauſted, that ſhe lay the remainder of the day quite ſtill, nor uttered a ſingle ſentence. Madame Derville was inconſolable, and every trace of returning chearfulneſs vaniſhed from the dwelling, where melancholy had, for many months, fixed her ſeat, and now took poſſeſſion anew.—Edward was little better in health, and much more alive to the horrors of his own mind than Louiſa, who, after lying ſome days unconſcious of her exiſtence, revived—Her wandering malady had left her, and ſhe ſeemed to awake as from a long and deep ſleep; her ſpirits were compoſed and calm; but conſiderable depredations were viſible on the frame of her body; and the phyſician, who had from the firſt attended her, pronounced her now in the laſt ſtage of a decline. By degrees ſhe recollected all that had happened to her; ſhe deſired to ſee her brother, that ſhe might aſſure him ſhe ſhould carry out of the world with her no reſentment towards him. For Helena ſhe ſtill preſerved the affection ſhe had conceived for her when not herſelf, and it was with infinite regret that Helena yielded to the neceſſity of leaving this amiable unfortunate young woman, in her preſent ſtate, as it was certain, when they parted, it muſt be for ever; for a few weeks would put a period to the life and ſufferings of Louiſa. She intreated

Julia

Julia not to protract her dear Henry's happineſs, but allow her the ſatisfaction, ere ſhe died, to think there was peace in ſtore for him. Julia aſſured her that as ſoon as ſhe could put off her outward mourning for a much-loved ſiſter, ſhe ſhould be ready at the altar, to prove the ſincerity of her regard for Henry; this ſatisfied her, and ſhe took leave of them all, with every aſſurance that ſhe ſhould retain a lively remembrance of their kindneſs till the hour of her death; of lord Huntley ſhe took particular notice, for ſhe fancied ſhe ſaw a reſemblance to her dear Auguſtus. Juſt as he was about to bid her adieu, ſhe ſaid to him. "May you, my lord, eſcape the fate of a man, whoſe countenance is brought back to my view by yours; may his untimely death be the only inſtance in which you ſhall ceaſe to be like him; farewel. May your life be long and happy," A painful recollection forced itſelf on the mind of lord Huntley, as Louiſa addreſſed him, his open countenance was overſpread with a riſing melancholy, and a deep ſigh heaved his boſom. "Perhaps," continued ſhe, "you have, like myſelf, and thouſands, equally ordained to ſuffer—taſted the bitter cup of diſappointment; your heart ſeems indeed formed to admit the moſt lively and exalted of paſſions; has it then met with an ungrateful return? or has the object of your fondeſt affections been ſnatched from you by death?" It was too much, he could command himſelf no longer, but turned from her to conceal his powerful emotion; the day, the fatal day, which gave him a ſiſter in his adored Helena, came freſh to his memory, attended with every aggravating circumſtance, and filled him anew

anew with the ſorrow he had been laboring to overcome. Seating himſelf by Louiſa, he replied, "I have, indeed, ſuffered the cruelleſt of diſappointments, in the moment when I thought myſelf ſecure of felicity; the woman I loved with an affection beyond words to expreſs, was indeed ſnatched from me, but not by death; not by any crime of ours; we were ſeparated by heaven and earth; for I found a ſiſter in the firſt and faireſt of her ſex. Lady Farnham was too lovely, too engaging, not to create the moſt laſting and exalted affection, and, by a combination of unfortunate events, we were kept ignorant of our near relationſhip, till we had formed an attachment, which, in attempting to break, nearly deprived us both of exiſtence; we have both ſuffered much; her ſufferings, I truſt, are finally at an end, for ſhe has ſacrificed her own inclination to oblige her family; ſhe married lord Farnham at their earneſt requeſt; and, I hope her virtue is now rewarded: for me, I can now contemplate her wonderous perfection, without a wiſh that does not tend to increaſe her happineſs—but, that I once hoped to call her mine, is ſufficient to prevent my ever forming any ſuch connexion more." Louiſa's eyes were not dry, though the copious ſtreams of ſorrow had long ſince robbed them of their luſtre. "Heaven and your own virtue," ſaid ſhe, "will ſooth all your griefs: lady Farnham is more than mortal; but you, my lord, are guided by views that will, in the end, give peace."

CHAP.

CHAP. LXXIV.

WHEN all that eſteem, affection, gratitude, and a lively regret at the neceſſity of parting, had by all been expreſſed; lord and lady Farnham, Julia, lord Huntley, lord Charles, and the count de St. Clare, ſet forward once more on their way to England; Henry Derville accompanied them as far as Dover, and took leave of Julia and the whole party, with a promiſe, that, when the fate of Louiſa was finally determined, and the firſt ſhock occaſioned by her death, which was not to be doubted, was over, he would take advantage of their kind invitation, and haſten to forget the misfortunes of his family, in the loved ſociety of his partial friends in England.——A proſperous gale ſoon conveyed them to their native ſhore;—as ſhort a time as poſſible only elapſed ere they reached Clevedon Houſe, where the duke and dutcheſs, with Laura, anxiouſly waited their arrival. A joy, too great for words to expreſs, filled the boſom of Helena, when ſhe found herſelf alternately in the arms of her affectionate friends. Lord Huntley forgot all his griefs for the time, in the embraces of a kind father, and the endearing careſſes of her whoſe tenderneſs had ever equalled that of the fondeſt mothers. Lord Charles reſumed his accuſtomed gaiety, which had been ſuſpended by the warm effuſions of ſenſibility, which the paſt ſcenes had called forth: he found his little friend Laura ſo much improved in the ſpace of a few months, that the growing

growing paſſion which had touched his youthful heart, ſoon warmed into a flame; and, the count de St. Clare, overjoyed to embrace a ſiſter, for whom he had ever entertained the pureſt regard, free from an improper connection, and carreſſed by a reſpectable family, had his full ſhare of the general ſatisfaction. Julia was not forgot, nor was ſhe overlooked; all that attention that the moſt benevolent politeneſs could dictate, was beſtowed on her; and lord Farnham confeſſed, he had never in his life experienced a happineſs ſo unmixed, as the moment when he ſaw himſelf the beloved huſband of Helena; whoſe family now paid him every reſpect that the happy alteration in his ſentiments demanded and deſerved. Mr. Nowel, who had joined their hands with no very flattering hopes of their happineſs, now ſincerely congratulated them both, on a change ſo conducive to future peace: for Helena, above diſguiſe, and ever happy and eager to communicate the bleſſings ſhe enjoyed, now proclaimed, with her wonted delicacy, the inward tranquility of her boſom; her eyes now ſparkled with their accuſtomed vivacity, and the hue of health and beauty painted her cheek once more. She met Sir James and lady Frances Sundan with every token of the regard ſhe entertained for them both; and they, in return, participated in her recovered happineſs. Miſs Weſtmorland was alone abſent, of thoſe dear friends ſhe wiſhed to ſhare with and add to their joys, but that ſhe might not entertain a regret which could be ſo eaſily removed, ſhe reſolved to write to her dear Maria, and intreat her immediate preſence in town, that ſhe might at once introduce her to lord Farnhm,

ham, whom ſhe begged her to forget as ſhe had once known him; to lord Huntley, whom ſhe had never ſeen; and to the count de St. Clare, who was higher in her eſteem each hour; his friendſhip for her amiable brother, his tender anxiety about the youthful Laura, and his reſpectful, yet friendly attention to herſelf and lord Farnham, all contributed to make him a valuable acquiſition to their domeſtic circle;—for, tho' lord and lady Farnham took immediate poſſeſſion of their own houſe in Portman-ſquare, yet the two families were ſcarcely ever ſeparated. Julia accompanied them, while the count and his ſiſter remained at Clevedon Houſe. Helena had been prevented, by the rapid ſucceſſion of unfortunate and ſubduing circumſtances, from being informed of ſome of the events in the life of the duke and her mother, which might account for her birth, and the reſpect with which the memory of her beloved parent was treated by the dutcheſs, as well as the man who acknowledged her for his child: this ſhe now ventured to requeſt, and the papers her mother had left behind for her information were delivered to her, to ſatisfy her doubts, and remove her ignorance relating to herſelf. She ſhed the tear of filial piety mixed with a ſenſation of ſorrow, that the author of her being, in every other reſpect amiable, noble and diſintereſted, ſhould have ſo truly proved the frailty of human nature. In her letter to Maria, who had known and loved her mother, ſhe related as much of the contents of her packet as explained the affair, and procured the memory of her parent a protection from contempt.

CHAP. LXXV.

To Miſs WESTMORLAND.

My dear Maria,

I Will not loſe a moment to acquaint you of our ſafe arrival in our native land once more, and to intreat that you will follow my example, in ſeizing an early time for removing your kind anxiety on my account, and telling you that we are all well and happy, by the moſt ſpeedy compliance with the earneſt wiſhes of all your friends, amongſt whom I have the beſt right to rank myſelf firſt; that you will join the now peaceful family in Portman Square without delay. I long to preſent lord Farnham to you, of whom I intreat you to entertain the moſt favorable opinion, and to forget you ever were acquainted with him. I am alſo anxious to make known to you, the moſt eſtimable of his ſex; and I doubt not but my Maria feels a curioſity to behold the man who ever was and ever will be infinitely dear to me. He too is ready to receive my friend with his wonted ſweetneſs. We have with us too, a nobleman, whoſe accompliſhments and valuable qualities would, I think, be matched and rewarded in the perſon of Maria Weſtmorland, from whoſe unreſerved confidence I expect I ſhould have known if ſhe entertained any partiality or diſtinguiſhed any man in particular; and I rather think the count de St. Clare has not yet ſeen the woman who could make him happy: come then, Maria, and verify my hopes and expectations. I can alſo promiſe

promiſe you an agreeable addition to your female acquaintance in Julia, of whom I have ſpoken before to you; ſhe is with us in Portman Square, and I beſpoke her good opinion for you. And now, my friend, it is my wiſh to communicate ſome few particulars relative to myſelf, for which purpoſe I ſhall tranſcribe part of a manuſcript written by my ever honored and lamented mother; in juſtice to whoſe memory I moſt ardently deſire to efface every unfavorable idea from the minds of thoſe few friends her life and converſation procured her at D——; you Maria, know that the birth of your friend had not the ſanction of marriage rites. At the time this diſcovery was made to me, I was ſo involved in the ſorrows occaſioned by it, that I could attend to nothing elſe; and, after my marriage, the events that ſucceeded made me almoſt inſenſible to all other concerns; all thoſe reaſons having expired, to the relief of a care-worn boſom, I reſolved, on my return home, to ſolicit the duke to give me an account in which I was ſo intimately connected. The time ſeemed the beſt I could have choſen; my own ſituation calling for the congratulation of my friends; lord Huntley's recovered tranquility and reſtoration to his family, and the enlivening proſpect of continuing peace, all contributed to ſtrengthen my deſire of mentioning the ſubject, which, in a leſs happy period I had carefully avoided: I obtained my requeſt as ſoon as it was made, for indeed when have I met with any thing but the utmoſt tenderneſs from the moſt affectionate of fathers, who might have conſidered me as a reproach to him, and, as ſuch, neglected me. As the duke gave

the paper into my hand, he ſaid, "I ought not to have ſuffered any ſelfiſh conſideration to have kept my Helena ſo long ignorant of her birth, and the ſtrong claim ſhe had to my warm affection; but, unwilling to place myſelf in an unfavorable light to my child, I deferred the communication too long; the virtues of my children have however ſaved me from ſinking under the alarming conſequence of my concealment: forbear if poſſible to deſpiſe your father, as you peruſe this paper; and while you pay a juſt tribute to the diſintereſted virtues of your mother, ſtill pity, forgive and retain your affection for me." The manner in which the duke addreſſed me, as well as his kindneſs, affected me greatly, and I almoſt repented that I had preferred my own gratification to his quiet; but, when his emotion ſubſided, he expreſſed himſelf eaſier than he was before.

My dear mother, after numerous expreſſions of affection, which ſhe ever manifeſted in the tendereſt manner to me, and a pious reſignation to the will of heaven, proceeds as follows:—"I was the daughter of a man whoſe family had long been faithful ſervants to the duke's, in the capacity of agents, and he filled that place with credit to himſelf and benefit to his lord, when I returned from ſchool, in my ſixteenth year; immediately after which the duke came down to an eſtate of his, on which my father reſided. His grace, who was a widower with one ſon (lord Huntley) was then on the eve of marriage with lady Auguſta M——, on which occaſion he came to inſpect ſome of his agent's accounts. He took up his reſidence in

in apartments he got for him in the houſe where we lived: I beheld him the moſt condeſcending, the moſt captivating of men; and my fond fooliſh heart admitted a paſſion as deſtructive as preſumptuous, and he unfortunately looked on me with an eye of favor. Nature had beſtowed ſome few graces of perſon on me which I lived to lament with perfect ſincerity. He made uſe of no artifice to ſeduce me; for his heart was too noble to harbour ſo baſe a thought; and I may truly ſay, it was not an abandoned inclination on my part which involved me in merited diſgrace. It was a fatal abſence of that guarded reſerve which ſhould accompany every woman that loves into the preſence of the object, particularly when ſo much her ſuperior as the duke was to me. We both forgot, for a moment, what we owed to virtue, to honor, and religion, to ourſelves and friends, and I never after recovered that peace which is the child of innocence; remorſe was my portion. To retreat from infamy was impoſſible, neither did I wiſh it on my own account; for the poignant ſorrow that ſeized me left me without a wiſh to conceal my ſhame, when I could not hide it from myſelf. I conſidered it as ſome atonement to bear the juſt reproach of an injured family: the duke offered me his name and fortune as a recompence for the conſequences of the mutual crime we had committed; but, could I have taken advantage of his generous intention, I had been ſtill more unworthy of ſuch happineſs. I threw myſelf at my father's feet to implore his pity and forgiveneſs, to confeſs my ſhame, and deprecate his anger by penitence and ſorrow. The

good

good old man, unaccuſtomed to infamy, felt all the force of his diſgrace and mine; but, inſtead of ſpurning me from him, he raiſed me up and wept over his unhappy child. During this eloquent tho' ſilent expreſſion of ſorrow, the duke entered the room to us, and, taking my father's hand, ſaid, "My good old friend, I have ill repaid your faithful ſervices and long attachment to my family; I have acted like a villain, and the only reparation in my power I am ready and willing to make. Helena is dear to me, and thus before God and her father I offer to make her my wife." "Heaven forbid!" replied my father, "your grace is engaged to unite yourſelf to a lady in all reſpects ſuitable to you. I know, my lord, you would not offer premeditated injury to your faithful ſervant; I will not therefore ſuffer you to ſacrifice yourſelf to an improper retribution; Helena muſt learn to bear a diſgrace ſhe has, alas, fatally incurred; I will never upbraid her, but pray heaven to alleviate her ſuffering, and reſtore her mind to peace and virtue!" "Her mind," ſaid the duke, "has loſt nothing of its love of virtue; for ſee, like a fading flower, ſhe droops at the tormenting idea of having ſullied her native purity; ſhe is unable to ſuſtain the weight of a crime of which I alone am guilty, for having miſled her youth and innocence. Lady Auguſta is too good, I am convinced, to unite herſelf to a man unworthy of her affection; I will tell her my fault, and intreat her to releaſe me, that I may preſerve my dear Helena from a diſgrace ſhe was not born to ſupport." My father was reſolute in declaring, that I never ſhould become the duke's wife;

wife; and, after every argument had been uſed on both ſides, and I had expreſſed my reſolution of never to accept an honor I had ſo little title to, his grace reluctantly ſubmitted to our determination, after he had amply provided againſt my ever feeling the want of an affluent ſubſiſtence, and prevailed on my father to retire with me to D——, where I was to paſs for a widow, and where I gave birth to you, my dear Helena. I took a tender leave of the duke, having vowed never to ſee him more till the hour of my death arrived. My father, after a few years ſpent in endeavouring to reconcile me to grief and to heaven, expired in my arms, bleſſing his penitent unhappy child. Ever after I divided my time and thoughts between my little daughter and my final removal from earth. The duke kept his engagement with Lady Auguſta M——, whoſe amiable qualities have, I hope, made him remember your mother only with compaſſion; indeed I have every reaſon to believe ſhe was born to make him happy, for not long after her marriage, ſhe kindly condeſcended to write, and ſhe aſſured me, that nothing ſhould have tempted her to be a bar to my union with the duke, and that, had ſhe not been ſolemnly acquainted by my father, that I never ſhould profit by her refuſal of his hand, ſhe would have withdrawn her claim; but my child ſhould be conſidered as her own, if I would reſign her to her care; or in caſe ſhe ſurvived me, ſhe promiſed to be a mother to you, my Helena: this promiſe, which I rely on, ſupports me under the dreadful idea of leaving you, my child. May God in his infinite mercy par-

don

don the mother, accept her penitence, and watch over her guiltleſs offspring."

Thus ended my mother, who, though in one fatal inſtance to be condemned, proved by every other action of her life, that a momentary weakneſs, though carefully to be guarded againſt by all who regard their peace and honor, does not always deprave the heart. Her life was exemplary, and her death ſerene: and may that God to whom ſhe has appealed, guard her daughter from ſin and misfortune, and conduct her as blameleſs to the grave. You, Maria, who knew my mother, will do juſtice to the guiltleſs honor of her actions, and beſpeak for her memory the regard it deſerves from all thoſe friends who reſpected her while living.

I hope it is needleſs to enforce my requeſt by any more aſſurances of the pleaſure we ſhall experience in ſeeing you: come, then, and, while you witneſs, partake and add to the felicity of your friend, who has ever conſidered you as the beſt proof of her powers of diſtinguiſhing, and cheriſhed your friendſhip as the greateſt treaſure in the hour of grief, diſappointment and anguiſh; and, now that ſhe is allowed to look forward to peace and ſatisfaction, let her not loſe the inexpreſſible pleaſure of pouring into the boſom of her dear Maria the fulneſs of joy. Remember me, with every kind and affectionate wiſh for their health and happineſs, to your good father and mother, to whom I am bound in gratitude and eſteem, and believe me your own very ſincere and faithful friend,

HELENA FARNHAM.

Lord Farnham's beſt regards attend you.

CHAP.

CHAP. LXXVI.

HELENA's letter to Maria had all the effect ſhe deſired; it ſoon brought her, on the wings of friendſhip and affection, to London, where, after the various accidents which had befallen them, ſhe beheld lord and lady Farnham quietly ſituated in their own houſe, beſtowing mutual happineſs on each other; her friend ſhe ſaw performing, with peculiar grace and ſweetneſs, the duties of her ſtation as wife, daughter, ſiſter and friend. She was confirmed in the account Helena had given her, and found lord Farnham the beſt and moſt affectionate of huſbands; lord Huntley exceeded her utmoſt expectations of elegance, beauty and exalted character, and the more ſhe ſaw of him, the more ſhe had reaſon to admire his virtues; lord Charles and the fair Laura ſeemed in the high road to a laſting connection, of which the count her brother could not but approve; and all that her friend had ſaid of the count himſelf appeared leſs than he deſerved. It is true, when in company with the huſband and brothers of Helena, ſhe could not think him handſome, but his perſon was graceful though not fine, his countenance, which wanted the ſeducing ſweetneſs of lord Huntley's, the piercing vivacity of lord Charles's, and the mixed expreſſion of ſenſe and ſpirit painted on Lord Farnham's, yet proclaimed the benevolence of his temper,

and

and the ſtrength of his underſtanding; he was well bred and entertaining, poſſeſſed of ſenſibility and judgment Maria ſoon found him an engaging companion. It was not long before he found, that, though ſhe was not equally endowed by nature with thoſe rare accompliſhments which raiſed her friend above every other woman, that ſhe yet poſſeſſed a ſufficient degree of the amiable and feminine qualities joined to a ſtrong, and a feeling heart to ſecure his affections. Maria Weſtmorland, though not beautiful, was a handſome pleaſing woman; her eyes were expreſſive, her complexion delicate, and her perſon graceful; chearful without being gay, judicious in her choice of friends, and ſteady in her friendſhips; ſhe had too much ſenſe to fall into the faſhionable follies of the day, but conformed ſo as not to be remarkable; a ſmall national prejudice at firſt prevented her giving way to her prepoſſeſſion in favor of the count; but by degrees that gave way to a warmer and more generous ſentiment, and their mutual friends ſaw a growing regard in the behaviour of each. Laura Tereſa, the count's ſiſter, when ſhe arrived in England, was poſſeſſed of all the natural qualifications of an amiable diſpoſition, but having lived with a woman who was unacquainted with real virtue, ſhe could have no ſolid principles to act on; ſhe was in fact an un-educated child; but the dutcheſs of Clevedon, who had kindly undertaken the care of her, did not content herſelf with ſeeing her ſafe from perſonal danger, but employed her time in cultivating the bounty of nature, and calling forth

forth the latent ſeeds of virtue and genius which ſhe diſcovered lurking in the heart of her young charge, and at the end of the ſummer ſhe delivered her to her brother, bleſſed with the powers of reaſoning with herſelf on the various properties of good and evil, animated, amiable and happy—her perſon improved in grace and ſtature; her features enlivened, and every native charm heightened: ſuch was the little Laura, whom lord Charles had reſcued from the power of a villain, and to whom he now ſurrendered his heart, and received one in return fraught with every good emotion. The duke and dutcheſs ſaw and approved, and lord Huntley rejoiced in the proſpect of uniting the ſiſter of his friend to his beloved brother. Helena was no leſs happy in the approach of a period which promiſed to cement by all the ties of love, friendſhip, eſteem, and tranquility, the affectionate regard each party felt for the other, and add to the felicity of the whole. The winter glided away in this agreeable and ſocial intercourſe, and it was agreed, that they ſhould ſpend the ſummer between Barnhurſt Caſtle and Farnham Abbey. Julia had frequent letters from Henry Derville, who was detained longer than he expected; for the poor Louiſa lingered beyond their idea of her ſtrength, and Edward, from his conſtant attendance on her, ſeemed to be in a ſtate of health which proclaimed a ſpeedy end to all his worldly troubles: at length his letters informed them that Louiſa was no more—her ſpirit had quietly left her worn-out frame, and reſigned itſelf into the arms of death—they were all much afflicted at the moment, though reflection convinced them

ſhe

ſhe could only be freed from pain in the grave; they paid the tribute of unaffected concern to her misfortunes. A few weeks brought Henry to England, who accompanied the reſt of the party to Farnham Abby, which removal lord Huntley mentioned in a letter to Sir Charles Fitzoſborne, his boſom friend, to whom he expreſſed his every thought.

"My dear Fitzoſborne,

"I thank you with all my heart, for your kind congratulations on the recovery of my loſt peace. I have indeed gained a ſmall conqueſt over my own feelings, which were, for ſome time too poignant to admit any repoſe into my boſom; and in anſwer to your deſire, that I would examine, whether the world does not contain another woman capable of filling up the void in my heart? give me leave to aſſure you I feel no void, my connections are too dear to me, and too amiable to leave me without objects to exerciſe my affections on; and that, while I ſee them happy, I can want no addition of the kind you adviſe me to try to my own tranquility. I will not to you affect to deny, that I ſhall ever feel the warmeſt attachment to Helena; but you, who know my heart and principles, will acquit me of nourriſhing an improper regard for her: it is ſufficient for me to behold her every hour, all lovely as ſhe is, ſoothing every affliction within her reach, performing every duty with propriety, and pious without parade—virtuous without affectation—poſſeſſed of chearfulneſs, ſo blended with the ſofteſt ſenſibility, that I muſt be the moſt unreaſonable

reaſonable as well as the moſt abandoned of men, if I was not ſatisfied with her happineſs, or could form a wiſh to diſturb it. In juſtice to lord Farnham, whom you have known leſs amiable, I muſt declare, that he is ſo much altered for the better, that I begin to eſteem and feel a regard for him, as the huſband of my beloved ſiſter; that ſhe is his pride and his felicity you will not wonder; and to her I aſcribe all his reſtoration to the paths of honor and morality, in which I ardently hope he will continue. Helena is now in a ſituation which engages our utmoſt attention and ſolicitude, and ſhe will not be long before ſhe adds to our happineſs, by multiplying our affections for whatever belongs to her, or plunge me into a ſtate of miſery that death will ſoon releaſe me from. I am convinced I could not ſurvive her; but why ſhould I think of any thing ſo truly diſtreſſing? My brother Charles is on the point of being married to the ſiſter of my friend, the count de St. Clare, a very amiable pretty girl, of whom my mother, the dutcheſs of Clevedon, has had the care for ſome time paſt, a circumſtance which is much in her favor with all who know that worthy woman. It depends on him to ſupport his family, which I truſt he will do with honor and happineſs. We are likely to have two other weddings here ſoon, as well as Charles's; for St. Clare is very much attached to a particular friend of lady Farnham's, who is now with her—Maria Weſtmorland is juſt the woman for a wife for my friend, who is as worthy a fellow as ever lived. I have had occaſion to mention Julia, the counteſs of Grenville's ſiſter, who accompanied us to England; ſhe is quickly to be united to a young

Frenchman

Frenchman of the name of Derville, of whom, when we meet, I will tell you an intereſting but melancholy ſtory. Theſe three couples bid fair for happineſs. We ſhall, I hope, ſee you and lady Fitzoſborne often, now we are ſettled in the country, where I expect to enjoy myſelf amidſt my faithful friends, free from the buſtle of the buſy world. I ſhall, my dear Fitzoſborne, give you back your friend unaltered in his regard to you; but otherwiſe much, very much changed. When we parted laſt, I was gay with hope; elate with the proſpect of that happineſs which mortals are not to expect unmixed in this world. I now no longer build my ideas and expectations of felicity on ſuch an unſtable foundation: I have experienced that the tranſitory enjoyments of this life are always interrupted by diſappointment, and ſullied by pain; I am not afraid to acknowledge, that I look beyond it for laſting and permanent tranquility. Tell lady Fitzoſborne that my beſt wiſhes and warmeſt regard attend her, and, that I ſhall be happy, in perſon, to aſſure her ladyſhip and yourſelf, how much I am the faithful friend of both.

HUNTLEY."

CHAP.

CHAP. LXXVII.

LADY Farnham, on her return home through Paris, had not forgot poor Caroline Danby, on whom ſhe had not only called, but with every ſoothing attention, ſo grateful to the oppreſſed heart, had, before ſhe quitted France, taken care effectually to ſecure to her an income annually, which would procure her all the comforts and conveniences of life. Lord Farnham had earneſtly deſired to make her all the reparation in his power, for the many evils he brought upon her; he had, during his illneſs, communicated every action of his paſt life to Helena, and amongſt other things, his cruel conduct to Caroline, and he commiſſioned his wife to preſerver her, by an ample ſubſiſtence, from further danger, and render her future days as eaſy as the circumſtances ſhe was now under would permit.

It was not long after their arrival in England, that Helena received a letter from her, expreſſing her gratitude, and calling her, her guardian angel; ſhe alſo mentioned Charlotte, the ſiſter of the unhappy count of Grenville, whom Helena knew had been placed in the ſame convent with Caroline: ſhe had not ſeen her, though ſhe freely forgave any injuries ſhe had done her; but ſhe was told that the condition of her health, and alſo the diſtraction of her mind, rendered it improper; ſhe had therefore charged Caroline to tell her that ſhe baniſhed all reſentment, and heartily

heartily wiſhed her every good ſhe could deſire. Caroline's letter now ſpoke of her as about to quit the world in a moſt pitiable ſtate of agitation and horror, and that by the time Helena read the account, ſhe muſt inevitably be no more an inhabitant of earth. Helena, ever ready to pity the ſorrows and weakeſſes of others, even her greateſt enemy, ſhed the tear of ſympathetic concern, and lamented the unhappy fate of the miſerable Charlotte.

Her attention was now called off all foreign and melancholy reflections to aſſiſt at, and rejoice in the auſpicious celebration of the nuptials of her brother and friends. At Barnhurſt Caſtle lord Charles Sidney was united in the indiſſoluble bond of marriage to Laura Teteſa St. Clare, and Ferdinhand Adolphus count of St. Clare, received the hand of the elegant Maria Weſtmorland, at the ſame altar; while Henry Derville and the amiable Julia, were made one by a prieſt of their own church.

The duke and dutcheſs beheld this ſcene of happineſs with inward ſatisfaction, and the dutcheſs found, in the felicity of her family, a more ſovereign remedy for health than ſhe had ever yet been able to procure by the help of medicine; and the birth of a ſon, which greatly augmented lord Farnham's happineſs, conſequently gave freſh vigour to Helena's, who, in every ſtage of life, ſhone with increaſing luſtre, as a wife, and mother, daughter, ſiſter, and friend; ſhe every hour exalted her own character, and gave new joy to her family; ſhe had reclaimed a libertine by the mildeſt arts, by the moſt inſinuating ſweetneſs of manners and temper, and by the

pureſt

pureſt example of unſhaken virtue; ſhe had triumphed over a paſſion fatal to her happineſs, and felt herſelf rewarded by the approbation of her own mind, and the reſpect, eſteem and affection of her friends. If the incidents of her life afford any uſeful leſſon to thoſe who may peruſe them, or ſerve, in any degree, to eſtabliſh the beauty or even utility of virtue and fortitude, in ſupporting unavoidable evils, the end propoſed is fully anſwered; may thoſe (and doubtleſs ſuch there are) who can form a better model, let the world profit by their abilities, purſue the line with ſucceſs themſelves, and be happy.

FINIS.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM